

Wolf Lake:
The Importance of Métis Connection to Land and Place

by

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Abstract

This thesis provides an analysis of Métis territoriality by examining the importance of Métis connection to land and place. In utilizing written archival document, as well as unwritten such as maps and photographs, the research sheds light on the connection Métis people had with the displaced community of Wolf Lake, Alberta.

In examining the displaced Métis community of Wolf Lake, which became a Métis settlement in the 1930s and was disbanded in 1960, the research reveals the layered connection to specific places. Wolf Lake was once a Métis wintering place, where families gathered to hunt and trap during the winter months. As settlement encroached upon Métis mobility, Wolf Lake became a more permanent year round community. It was a place where Métis families made a living with the land, which fostered their political, economic and social traditions. Such connections to land and place occurred through daily life activities, one based on reciprocity with all living and non-living relations.

The colonial system disregarded the sophisticated way of knowing of Métis peoples and communities. Dispossession occurred at Wolf Lake due to colonial understanding of land as a ‘thing’. Therefore governments and settlers harnessed the area for its resources such as oil, gas, and timber, and for its military potential with the establishment of the Primrose Air Weapons Range in 1956. Government initiatives and systems functioned to disinherit Métis peoples from the land.

The research renders these histories of forced displacement visible, in order to challenge narratives that erase Indigenous histories, and enables a platform by which Indigenous histories and relations to the land may be reframed. Wolf Lake serves as an important reminder of the existence of Métis territory, and the importance of Métis places

Preface

The thesis is an original work done by Chantal Roy Denis. No part of this thesis has been previously published.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Indigenous people's sense of home and place are configured differently to that of migrants. There is no other homeland that provides a point of origin, or place for multiple identities. Instead our rendering of place, home and country through our ontological relation to country is the basis of our ownership.¹

--Aileen Moreton-Robinson

My central research questions:

1. How does examining a displaced community help to understand the importance of Métis territoriality and place, rooted in Métis political, economic, and social traditions?
2. How can examining a displaced Métis community help me to come to know the systems and structures that disinherit Métis from traditional territory?

Métis communities developed throughout Rupertsland based on the dynamic nature of their engagement in the fur trade. In late eighteenth and nineteenth century, Métis peoples created and pursued opportunities in the fur trade. Métis men, women and families partook in a variety of economic niches such as voyageurs, servants, suppliers of pemmican, freighters, traders and freemen, and interpreters.² Partaking in the fur trade economy at this time required movement across vast territories. According to historian Nathalie Kermoal such movement was essential to Métis way of life: “Historically, the Métis way of life depended on the existence of open spaces – territory across which they could travel freely, hunting, fishing, and gathering plants.”³

¹ Aileen Moreton-Robinson, “I Still Call Australia Home: Indigenous Belonging and Place in a White Postcolonizing Society,” in *Uprootings/Regroundings: Questions of Home and Migration*, ed. by Sara Ahmed, Claudia Castada, Anne-Marie Fortier, and Mimi Sheller, (Oxford: Berg Publishing, 2003): 37.

² Nicole St-Onge and Carolyn Prodruchny, “Scuttling Along A Spider’s Web: Mobility and Kinship in Metis Ethnogenesis,” in *Contours of a People: Metis Family, Mobility, and History*, ed. by Nicole St-Onge, Carolyn Prodruchny, and Brenda Macdougall, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2012): 61.

³ Nathalie Kermoal, “Métis Women’s Environmental Knowledge and the Recognition of Métis Rights,” in *Living on the Land: Indigenous Women’s Understanding of Place*, ed. by Nathalie Kermoal and Isabel Altamirano-Jiménez, (Edmonton: Athabasca Press, 2016): 117.

For the Métis, mobility across the expanse of territory was possible due to their highly sophisticated kinship networks. These kinship relationships functioned as nodes across the territory, allowing the Métis to trap, hunt, trade and winter. Nicole St-Onge and Carolyn Prodruchny add that the “smallest hunting camps and outposts were connected to global systems of trade and alliance over vast geography expanses through extended webs of kin as well as economic, social, and cultural activities that bound people together.”⁴ From the development of networks in the fur trade, centres emerged such as Red River, Batoche, Lac La Biche, Île-à-la-Crosse, and Green Lake. These centres were more or less stable, although many were faced with destabilizing periods and armed resistance, they nonetheless remain today as important Métis communities. Overlooked are the smaller nodes that developed, the “smaller hunting camping and outposts”,⁵ and further overlooked are the Métis communities that were completely displaced. Wolf Lake was one such smaller node in a larger interconnected Métis territory, a community which developed from a wintering site, to a year round community, to one of the twelve Alberta Métis settlements, and eventually to its displacement.

Wolf Lake was an important site for Métis families and community. It is situated in the north eastern region of the Province of Alberta (See Appendix 2, p. 133). In 1936, the Commission appointed to investigate Métis destitution in the Province of Alberta released its final report and recommendation known as the Ewing Commission report. It stimulated tracts of land or settlements be set aside for the benefit of Métis people in Alberta, with Wolf Lake being designated as one of the twelve Métis settlements (See Appendix 1, p. 132). In 1960, Wolf Lake was the fourth Métis settlement to be closed by the government.

⁴ St-Onge and Prodruchny, “Scuttling Along A Spider’s Web”: 67.

⁵ Ibid.

Literature regarding the Métis settlements is vast but is also dotted with gaps. The dominant historical narrative follows a similar pattern: there was once twelve settlements, today there are only eight. There is little or no information regarding the four settlements that were no longer in existence by 1960. The literature covers extensively the creation and movement of the Métis Association of Alberta (MAA), and its key leaders James Brady and Malcolm Norris. It further elaborates on the contemporary legal analysis and political implications of the settlements in a post-1982 framework. The typical trajectory starts with in the late 1920s and 1930s providing the conditions that led to the rise of the MAA, and ends at 1940 once the MAA creates the Métis settlements, only to pick up at approximately 1980 and onward with the creation of the Métis Settlements Federation. In between lies a large gap of approximately 40 years.

Very little accessible literature exists on: how did Métis people in the 1930s-1940s choose to establish themselves on one settlement versus another? Why were four settlements closed? What happened to the families residing on the closed settlements? What was Métis peoples', families and communities' attachment to the settlement lands set aside for them? What were the impacts of the closed settlements on the families that were residing in those areas? These questions are not easily answered. When considering Wolf Lake there is little to no information available, only endless questions. What does it take to render a displaced and dispersed Métis community an important Métis place visible?

The significance of these Métis communities are often forgotten due to their displacement, and subsequent state erasure. These stories of Métis displacement have been rendered invisible. As noted by Kermoal, "Western epistemologies continue to dominate and

define the boundaries of legitimate knowledge.”⁶ Kermoal suggests that these western epistemologies such as legal traditions function to reduce and marginalize Indigenous women’s knowledge in support of claims to Aboriginal title. Similarly, western knowledge reduces Métis connection to specific places in support of other relevant legal aspects such as hunting and harvesting rights.⁷

Furthermore, in reducing the significant connection Métis peoples have to place, these western epistemologies view place as separate from a community’s established practices. As such they simultaneously fail to recognize the embodied and layered experience of the land with Métis cultural, political and social aspects. Métis communities such as Saint Madeleine in Manitoba, which was lost due to government action in the 1930s, are relocated and displaced due to a system that views land as separate from Métis existence. And like the community at Wolf Lake, these communities serve as an important reminder of the existence of Métis territory, and the importance of Métis places. My hope is that this study will provide further understanding of the systems that displaced Métis peoples and communities. Furthermore, the research will emphasize the importance of Métis territoriality. In order to unravel the importance of Métis place to Métis cultural, political, and social aspects, I specifically examine the displaced community of Wolf Lake, Alberta. Wolf Lake as a case study, allows me to understand how Métis communities as a whole are displaced, but also highlights the value of remembering. It is imperative to remember our stories, our Métis values, and those places that fostered Métis way of life with the land.

⁶ Kermoal, “Métis Women’s Environmental Knowledge”: 112

⁷ Ibid., 114.

Aim of Study

Rendering a community and its attachment to a specific place visible requires teasing out stories of people who made their living with the land, with their relations, in their day to day lives, as well as with their political and social networks. It further requires that I examine the systems that uprooted communities, and made them invisible. It is however important that I examine why it is important to remember, and to understand the yearning and pull to Métis places.

Returning to those important Métis places, where our communities may or may not still exist, is not an easy or comfortable process given that overarching narratives, politics, and government policies have interrupted our connection to land and Métis way of life. A return to the land is increasingly romanticized as a wonderful homecoming, one filled with wisdom, teachings, and clarity. It is not a romantic process, nor should it be, it necessitates addressing past pains that still dwell. The process of self-reflexivity, and self-knowing, has driven me to the research question and the aim of this study: to what extent can examining a displaced community help me to come to know the systems and structures that disinherit? But simultaneously, how can this coming to know reinstate the importance of remembering as a form of resistance? My study of the meaning of connection to land – draws from the experience of the Métis community of Wolf Lake in Alberta.

This study documents the interconnectivity of Métis knowledge, way of life with specific places on the land. Looking at displaced community helps me to not forget, but also to recognize that there was a whole system positioned to weaken our connection to the land, and as such to

our culture and traditions. The aim of the study is to centre Métis ways of knowing and relating to the land as important elements to reclaiming Métis territoriality. A second aim is to rescript and to unsettle the internalized deficit of what it means to be Métis, and settler colonial notion of land. Métis territoriality does not exist in isolation to ourselves as people, but rather is interwoven with traditions, values and ways of knowing. This work furthers the visibility and value of Métis connection to land so that we never forget these connections, even in the context where entire communities have been displaced or no longer exist. By examining displaced community such as the Wolf Lake I hope to answer my key research questions.

Chapter Overview

Chapter two explains and examines the literature relevant to the research. The research expands upon the literature, while also identifying and filling in narrative gaps. I examine the historiography of Métis studies, from its inception by scholars such as Marcel Giraud and George Stanley, to the impacts and shift in Métis studies with the rise of social history in the 1970s. I further explore the literature on sense of place and its limits to Indigenous understanding of place and territoriality. I also explore the more recent work done by scholars examining the density and richness of Métis life, such as Brenda Macdougall, Nicole St. Onge, Carolyn Prodruchny, John Foster, and Nathalie Kermoal. My literature review will present key concepts and ideas relevant to my research.

Chapter three explains the methodology applied in this study. I first situate myself since it is essential to Indigenous researchers to do so, since the research is intrinsically tied to our own understandings. My methodology is grounded in Indigenous research methodology, which

functions to make the invisible visible.⁸ Drawing on archival works and Métis worldview the archival approach allows looking back in order to look forward. Examining archival documents in order to map the development of the community of Wolf Lake, their daily activities, and as such their synergetic relationship with the land renders visible the sophisticated Métis way of life of making a living with the land. Moreover, the archives bring to light the systematic discrimination that is embedded in the colonial ideology of land.

However, archives highlight the significance of the Métis way of life and the Métis way of doing things. I will present how archival work is important to bring us back in order to look forward. In order to tease Métis experience from the archives, I employ a Métis lens, one centred on Métis ways of knowing and making a living with the land. My research is framed through Métis traditional world view, which Elmer Ghostkeeper calls the “Métis way of doing things.” This Métis worldview is centred on our relationship with the land, with all living and non-living beings. As an Indigenous Research perspective, “Métis way of doing things” informs our existence with the land. In this chapter, I will explain further the Indigenous research perspective “Métis way of doing” which informs our existence with the land and all beings.

In chapters four and five, I provide a historical account of how the community of Wolf Lake reflects the intelligence and beauty of Métis way of doing. I examine the Wolf Lake residents’ daily activities that reinforce the important connection to land as well as informs their traditions. I explore the large relationality of the Wolf Lake area with other significant areas in the larger Beaver River basin, such as connection to Lac La Biche, Cold Lake and St. Paul des

⁸ Kathleen Absolon, *Kaandossiwin: How We Come To Know*, (Halifax; Winnipeg : Fernwood Publication, 2011):13.

Métis. The importance of hunting, fishing and trapping traditions and their multidimensional aspects to Métis life and diplomatic traditions. These diplomatic traditions were a form of self-governance, which allowed co-existing with non-Indigenous peoples as long as they adhered to Métis established governance structures.

I will further present how a Métis community thrived based on its kin, water, trails, and understanding of the environment and land. Based on such important aspects as visiting and sharing as a safety net within the community. Building on chapter four, chapter five further unravels the complexity as well as the impacts of politics of land: the dispossessive nature of government systems such as the introduction of trap line regulations, military expansion, and the extraction of oil, gas and timber resources. I discuss the impacts of a changing environment in the mid-twentieth century for Métis people at Wolf Lake, and the systems that led to its closure. I will unpack the complexity of the politics whereas Métis political organization such as the MAA adopts a protection model that is rooted in paternalism and reinforces a deficit model.

My final chapter will summarize my research findings. I will return to the research purpose and research questions, and share an overview of the research contributions. In addition to my own personal reflections and future research directions.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Literature Review

The past thirty years have seen an explosion of interest in Métis studies. While most of the research has focused on the fur trade, Red River and Batoche, with a diversity of methods historians have greatly expanded our understanding of the Métis people and their political struggles. Before the 1970s, early Métis literature had concentrated largely on the two Métis Resistances: 1869-1870 in Red River, and 1885 in Batoche.⁹ The attention centred on the Red River Métis, more specifically the economic and political conditions preceding the Resistance of 1869 and the subsequent dispersal of Métis from Red River.

George Stanley's *The Birth of Western Canada: A History of the Riel Rebellions* concludes that the Resistance of 1869 was due to the uncivilized Métis' inability to adapt to the modern world. While W.L. Morton in his study *Alexander Begg's Red River Journal and Other Papers*, disagrees with Stanley, he argues the Métis were indeed civilized but it was their deficient characteristics of nomadic hunting practices that was to blame for their dispersal from Red River. Morton and Stanley's works however focused mainly on politics.

Anthropologist Marcel Giraud produced the very first social history, and at the time the most complete historical work on Métis in *The Métis in Canadian West*. Giraud explores the

⁹ See Joseph Howard, *Strange Empire: Louis Riel and the Métis People*. Toronto: J. Lorimer, 1977; D.N. Sprague, *Canada and the Métis, 1869-1885*. Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier Press, 1988; Thomas Flanagan, *Riel and the Rebellion, 1885 Reconsidered*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000; Walter Hildebrandt, *The Battle of Batoche: British small warfare and the entrenched Metis*. Ottawa: Parks Canada, 1985; Gerhard Ens, *Homeland to Hinterland: The Changing Worlds of the Red River Metis in the Nineteenth Century*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996. and J.M. Bumsted, *The Red River Rebellion*, Winnipeg. Watson & Dwyer, 1996.

development of what he defines as two types of Métis society.¹⁰ The first, the Plains Métis in and around Red River, who were connected to the French fur traders. The second, the more northern Métis associated with the Hudson Bay Company. Giraud's study concentrated largely on the southern plains Métis, and what he characterized as their nomadic movements. Perceiving Métis as nomadic overlooks the sophisticated Métis way of making a living with the land. And subsequently the importance of specific places that engender such a living and also Métis traditions. Although Giraud's study is rooted in theory of evolutionary progress (just as Stanley's and Morton's), that is that certain groups of people are unable to progress to civilized standards due to their biological deficiencies, and in the case of the Métis being perceived as nomadic – unable to plan for the future, he nonetheless delivers an impressive historical work that records the activities and traditions of Métis peoples in the late nineteenth century. While he analyzes the rise of Métis nationalism as Morton and Stanley did, he also thoroughly documents hunting and fishing activities, cultivation of crops and wild rice at Red River.¹¹ As well, he spends considerable time in his analysis referring to other Métis communities found on the Prairies throughout the nineteenth century, such as Batoche, St. Albert, Lac Ste. Anne, Lac La Biche, etc. giving us a glimpse of Métis life outside of Red River. Morton, Stanley and Giraud's studies of the Red River Métis were rooted in social Darwinism, producing studies of Métis as primitive and uncivilized. The works of these male historians although distinct, will arrive at the same conclusion. That is, the Métis as a people were doomed, "they had to be pushed aside to make way for newcomers."¹²

¹⁰ Marcel Giraud, *The Metis In the Canadian West*. Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1986.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 267, 271, and 475-476.

¹² D. N. Sprague, *Canada and the Métis, 2.1869-1885*, (Waterloo, Ont.: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1988): 2.

In the 1960s and 1970s a shift occurred with the rise of social history. New study directions emerged such as the study of labour and union history, women's history, ethnic and immigration studies, all of which challenged Canada's grand narrative of history. A history that was mainly engrossed with Canada's military and politics. The emergence of social history created a platform for Indigenous history, and has allowed the emergence of new narratives and studies relating to the social aspects of Métis peoples. During the 1980s studies by Sylvia Van Kirk, Jennifer Brown, and Jacqueline Peterson, have contributed to Indigenous studies by providing historical accounts of Aboriginal women's experience and lives.¹³

Social history opened the doors for the study of Métis women and family, social networks, and experience with Church, politics and racism. The emergence of Métis studies during this period challenged the social Darwinism and evolutionary progress studies of Métis peoples, tempering these past studies with new directions in Métis ethnogenesis, and social formation. John Foster's article "Wintering, the Outsider Adult Male and the Ethnogenesis of the Western Plains Métis," moved Métis studies toward consideration of the ethnogenesis of Plains Métis. Foster's study centres Métis ethnogenesis from the practice of fur trade employees wintering on the Plains. He argues that by wintering, these fur trade men (*les hivernants*) provided the conditions by which Métis peoples would emerge.¹⁴ This occurred with the taking

¹³ <http://www.hbcheritage.ca/hbcheritage/collections/other/gift/home>. See: Sylvia Van Krik, *Many Tender Ties: Women in the Fur Trade 1670-1870*. Winnipeg, MB: Watson & Dwyer, 1980; Jennifer S.H. Brown, *Strangers in Blood: Fur Trade Company Families in Indian Country*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1980; Harold Innis, *The Fur Trade in Canada: An Introduction to Canadian Economic History*; AJ Ray, *The Canadian Fur Trade in the Industrial Age*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999. and Gerhard Ens, *Homeland to Hinterland: The Changing Worlds of the Red River Metis in the Nineteenth Century*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996.

¹⁴ John E. Foster, "Wintering, the Outsider Adult Male and the Ethnogenesis of the Western Plains Métis," in *From Rupert's Land to Canada*, eds. John Elgin Foster, R. C. Macleod, Theodore Binnema. (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2001): 180.

of a “country wife” from an Indian band, and thereby developing kinship relationships with the Indian males from the band.¹⁵ One such wintering site was that of Buffalo Lake in Alberta, south of the present day city of Red Deer. Foster notes that the Buffalo Lake wintering site consisted of roughly 1,000 inhabitants.¹⁶ Foster’s study challenged Métis studies and works such as Stanley’s and Morton’s, who placed Métis peoples as the “losers” to the encroachment of the settler nation.

Like the work of Foster, Diane Payment, Nathalie Kermaal and Nicole St. Onge changed the direction of Métis studies by examining the complex Métis communities and traditions. Payment’s social history of Batoche, Kermaal’s study of the daily lives of Métis women, in Western Canada and St. Onge’s examination of St. Eustache, all contributed to the study of Métis women, and dynamics of Métis communities.¹⁷ More recently, scholars such as Brenda Macdougall and Nicole St. Onge have expanded our understanding of Métis communities and Métis history by examining the social aspects of Métis communities, such as the maternal networks of buffalo brigades, and plains Métis ethnogenesis¹⁸. Studies like those done by St. Onge & Macdougall, contribute to a larger understanding of Métis social networks, movement, significant places, and life. Métis studies have been transformed, from emphasizing the experiences of Red River Métis, the rise of political and national ambitions, and the two Resistances, to the study of the layered and dynamic nature of Métis family, gender, community

¹⁵ Foster, “Wintering, the Outsider Adult Male and the Ethnogenesis of the Western Plains Métis,”: 180.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 182.

¹⁷ See Diane Payment, *The Free people – Otipemisiwak: Batoche, Saskatchewan, 1870-1930*. Ottawa: Parks Canada, 1990; Nathalie Kermaal, *Un Passé Métis Au Féminin*, Saint Foy: GID, 2006; Nicole St. Onge, “Memories of Métis Women of Saint-Eustache, Manitoba – 1910-1980,” in *Oral History Forum*.” In *Native Studies Review*, vol 19-20 (2000). 17, no. 2 (2008).

¹⁸ See Nicole St. Onge, “Memories of Métis Women of Saint-Eustache, Manitoba – 1910-1980,” in *Oral History Forum*.” In *Native Studies Review*, vol 19-20 (2000); . 17, no. 2 (2008); Brenda Macdougall, *One of the Family: Metis Culture in Nineteenth Century Northwestern Saskatchewan*, Vancouver University of British Columbia Press, 2010; Brenda Macdougall, and Nicole St-Onge, “Rooted in Mobility: Metis Buffalo Hunting Brigades.” *Manitoba History* Special Edition: Red River Revisited. vol. 71 (2013): 21-32.

and kinship networks. In addition, increasingly more Métis scholars are studying and writing on Métis history and contemporary challenges.¹⁹

These studies' have been central to the development of Métis studies, they have also provided a platform for new directions. An analysis of these most recent works reveals that anchored, and relatively stable communities, situated at the heart of the Métis homeland, such as Batoche, and Red River, continue to drive much of Métis studies. These studies rarely focused on Métis communities outside of Batoche and Red River and their immediate influences.. Displaced communities are as also rarely examined.

One of the few studies to investigate such displacement and destruction is *Ste. Madeleine: A Community Without a Town* by Ken and Victoria Zeilig. Ste. Madeleine was a Métis community in Manitoba situated roughly 300 kilometers north west of Winnipeg, sitting near the Manitoba and Saskatchewan border. Located north of Fort Ellice, a HBC post which employed Métis traders and freighters, the area played a very significant economic role in the nineteenth century. As Diane Payment noted, “Fort Ellice became an important “stopping place” and provisioning post for the independent Métis traders and freighters travelling the Carlton trail en route to the hibernements in the Qu’Appelle valley, the Cypress Hills, the South Saskatchewan river district and points further west such as Ile a la Crosse and St. Albert.”²⁰

¹⁹ See Brenda Macdougall, *One of the Family: Metis Culture in Nineteenth Century Northwestern Saskatchewan*, Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2010; Chris Andersen *Métis: Race, Recognition, and the Struggle for Indigenous Peoplehood*, Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2014; Heather Devine, *The People Who Own Themselves: Aboriginal Ethnogenesis in a Canadian Family, 1660-1990*. Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2013.

²⁰ Diane Payment, *Manitoba History: Review: Ken and Victoria Zeilig Ste. Madeleine Community Without a Town; Métis Elders in Interview*. Manitoba History, no. 17 (Spring 1989).
http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/mb_history/17/stemadeleine.shtml

In the 1930s the Canadian government implemented the Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Act, an effort to establish pasture land for farmers. During the depression period of the 1930s, Eurocanadian farmers were to benefit from these community pastures. The Ste. Madeleine Métis community was chosen as the location for a community pasture, and the Métis subsequently were removed from the area.²¹ Their homes were burned, and the community turned to ashes.

The Zeiligs' conducted interviews with the Métis peoples who once called Ste. Madeleine home. The study serves as an important account of Métis lived experience of displacement in the twentieth century. The book consists mainly of transcribed interviews with Métis elders, and is an excellent testimony of Métis lived experience. With the exception of a brief introduction, however, there is little contextual framing or analysis of the displacement. Beyond the shortcomings of the study, it provides an exceptionally important account of Métis displacement in the twentieth century, thus breaking the literature gap in Métis history. In addition, Zeilig's study is an analysis of Métis experiences in the twentieth century, a period that has received less attention than the nineteenth century.

Past Métis studies centering on political and military aspects of Métis at Red River and Batoche fail to recognize the multidimensional nature of Métis way of life. Recent studies have unpacked the nature of Métis political and national traditions. These studies lend clarity, and much needed contextual rooting, to the rise of Métis nationalism in the twentieth century. Significantly, they discuss and situate the rise of Métis nationalism in Alberta in the 1930s, the

²¹ Ken Zeilig and Victoria Zeilig, *Ste. Madeleine: Community Without A Town, Metis Elders in Interview*, (Winnipeg: Pemmican Publications, 1987): xii.

Métis Association of Alberta, and its mobilization in pressuring the provincial government to establish the Alberta Métis settlements.

Kelly Saunders' article "No Other Weapon: Métis Political Organization and Governance in Canada" surveys the rise of Métis nationalism in Alberta. Saunders provides an overview of the evolution of Métis self-governance throughout Canada. She examines Métis historic forms of governance, such as the organization of the buffalo brigades, through to the creation of representative associations such as the Native Council of Canada. She contends that Métis peoples sought opportunities to push back upon constraints imposed on us, and were, and still are, resolute to fight for self-governance.²²

Following a similar narrative as Saunders, Siomonn Pulla's article "Regional Nationalism or National Mobilization? A Brief Social History of the Development of Métis Political Organization in Canada, 1885-2011" reviews the relationship between historic establishment and contemporary organization of Métis associations in Canada.²³ Pulla's study moves from the local (micro) emergence of Métis associations in the nineteenth century, to the national (macro) associations in the twentieth century. Like Saunders, Siomonn uncovers the unyielding fight and struggle for Métis self-governance. Saunders, and Pulla provide a necessary context to better understanding the efforts of the Métis Association of Alberta's establishment of the settlements, by linking the MAA's efforts to those of Métis nationalism in the nineteenth century (i.e.

²² Kelly Saunders, "No Other Weapon: Métis Political Organization and Governance in Canada," in *Métis in Canada: History, Identity, Law & Politics*, eds. Christopher Adams, Gregg Dahl, and Ian Peach, (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2013): 374-375.

²³ Siomonn Pulla, "Regional Nationalism or National Mobilization? A Brief Social History of the Development of Métis Political Organization in Canada, 1885-2011", in *Métis in Canada: History, Identity, Law & Politics*, eds. Christopher Adams, Gregg Dahl, and Ian Peach, 397-432. Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2013.

Cuthbert Grant and Seven Oaks, Manitoba 1869-1879, and North West Resistance of 1885). Understanding the contextual rise of Métis nationalism, and specifically the MAA's efforts, allows better situating the importance of land for the Métis.

The research on the Wolf Lake Métis settlement builds on the substantial body of Métis research highlighting the dynamic social, political, and cultural aspects of Métis families and communities. Analysis of the histories of forced displacement allows us to de-centre ourselves but also to challenge narratives that erased Métis histories. In addition, by stepping away from the political, other realities and aspects of Métis life such as connection to land and place can be emphasized. It also provides a twentieth century profile of a Métis community never previously examined. My research will evince the importance of inhabiting a place for Métis people which means a place that in turn inhabits us, and informs all aspects of our Métis way life.

Wolf Lake was established as a Métis settlement in 1938. However, existing Alberta Métis settlements literature is dotted by obvious gaps. The official literature presented by the Métis Settlements General Council as well as academic literature, all follow a similar narrative: 1) St. Paul des Métis colony was established in 1895 and disbanded in 1905; 2) 1932 the Métis Association of Alberta was established; 3) In 1935 the Ewing Commission investigates Métis conditions in Alberta; 4) 1938 the Population Betterment Act is passed by the Alberta Legislature through which 12 settlements are created; 5) by the 1950s, four settlements are dissolved; 6) 1982 the Grant MacEwan Joint Métis-Government Committee to review the Métis Betterment Act is formed, and 6) in 1989 the Metis Settlements Accord is adopted as a

framework for self-governance.²⁴ Little or no literature elaborates on the settlement closure, nor do they discuss the importance of land to Métis ways of knowing.

The Ewing Commission was established in the 1930s after lobbying by the newly created Métis Association of Alberta (MAA) to investigate the destitution and socio-economic conditions of Métis people in the province. From the Ewing Commission report, tracks of lands were set aside for Métis peoples as a means to improving their socio-economic conditions such as undertaking agriculture. From the Commission's report, twelve settlements were created for Métis peoples, whereas only eight remain today (See Appendix 1: Alberta Settlements Map, p. 132). While this timeline highlights the founding events of the Métis settlements and these dates undoubtedly represent important markers of the history of the settlements, the closure of the four settlements in the 1950s and 1960 is only mentioned in passing without delving into the reasoning behind such closures. In fact very little is known regarding the closure of the settlements; thus the motives, reasoning, and impacts are in most cases completely absent from the literature.

Apart from an official literature that always follows the same chronology, scholars have primarily stressed the legal aspects of the Métis Settlement Betterment Act, as well focusing largely on the development of the settlement legislation, the politics of the Métis Association of Alberta, and the history of the creation of the Métis Settlements themselves. The literature includes a great deal of discussion around the creation of the Métis Association of Alberta, the

²⁴ Métis Settlements General Council, *Making History: Our Land. Our Culture. Our Future*. 2005.
<https://metissettlements.com/history/>

organization that lobbied the Alberta government to look into the conditions of the Métis in the 1930s.

Joe Sawchuk, Patricia Sawchuk and Theresa Ferguson's *Métis Land Rights in Alberta*, for example, explores the hardship faced by Métis peoples in Alberta, from scrip commissions to the St. Paul des Métis settlement creation in 1896 and closure in 1906, and to the creation of the Métis settlements in 1938.²⁵ Sawchuk's study analysis goes beyond studying the Métis conditions in Alberta in the twentieth century, rather he acknowledges the larger struggle of Métis and land in the North West starting in the nineteenth century. In regards to the creation of the settlements in Alberta, Sawchuk deduces that their creation and implementation was based on government welfare scheme, based on a similar model when the Church established St. Paul des Métis in 1896. As such, the author believes that Métis self-governance was not feasible, and their struggle continued.

As Sawchuk contributes a concise overview of Métis conditions leading to the establishment of the settlements, Murray Dobbin's *One and a Half Men*, investigates Métis conditions through the perspective of the MAA leadership, that is James Brady and Malcolm Norris.²⁶ Although Dobbin's *One and a Half-Men* is somewhat a biography of Brady and Norris' lives, he narrates the importance of the rise of Métis political agency in the twentieth century. Much like Sawchuk, he follows a historical approach to studying the settlements – although

²⁵ Joe Sawchuk, Patricia Sawchuk, and Theresa Ferguson, *Metis Land Rights in Alberta: A Political History*. Edmonton: Metis Association of Alberta, 1981.

²⁶ Murray Dobbin, *The One-and-a-Half Men: The Story of Jim Brady & Malcolm Norris Metis Patriots of the 20th century*. Vancouver: New Star Books, 1981.

Dobbin focuses on the leaders, and Sawchuk is more concerned with the loss and rights of Métis people to land.

Thomas Pocklington's *The Government and Politics of Metis Settlements* moreover follows a different approach than that of Sawchuk and Dobbin, by examining the political structure of the Métis settlements. Less concerned with the establishment of the settlements, Pocklington assesses the evolution of Métis settlements' internal political structure (i.e. elected settlement councillors), and their relations to external public and private agencies.²⁷ Pocklington underlines the role of the Métis settlements political representatives and its success in negotiating the 1989 Settlement Accord. While Pocklington provides an examination of the political structure and efforts of self-governance, he does not provide a legal analysis of the legislation.

Catherine Bell's *Alberta's Metis Settlements Legislation* provides the in-depth legal analysis of settlement legislation that Pocklington's study does not capture. Bell examines how the settlement laws regulate daily life, politics and their future. She delves into the various settlements' legislation, meticulously mapping the legislative amendments and their subsequent impacts. In doing so, Bell provides a clear overview of how the various problems on the settlements problems arose from former legislation, and were resolved through Province and Métis negotiations, resulting in new legislation.²⁸ Bell concludes that the settlement legislation negotiations are a model for consultation and cooperation between government and an

²⁷ Thomas Pocklington, *The Government and Politics of the Alberta Metis Settlements*, (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Centre, 1991): xi.

²⁸ Catherine E. Bell, *Alberta's Metis Settlement Legislation: An Overview of Ownership and Management of Settlement Lands*, (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Centre, 1994): 83.

Indigenous political representatives. Sawchuk, Dobbin, Pocklington and Bell's works informs our understanding of the Métis settlements.

Although these studies represent significant academic contributions, none shed light on the history of the closure of the four settlements or even their history as communities. Bell's discussion of settlement legislation does mention that a problematic aspect of previous Métis settlement legislation was that the Metis land base was vulnerable and the province could and did disestablish settlements.²⁹ While Sawchuk is concerned with Métis loss of land from the nineteenth to the twentieth century, he overlooks and/or fails to make the connection between Métis continued land loss and the closure of the settlements. Dobbin and Pocklington both follow a similar pattern as Sawchuk. In addition, the literature does not discuss or recognize the importance of land to Métis peoplehood, kinship, and sense of place. The silence surrounding the community itself and its closure does not allow for any understanding of the people/families that made up the Wolf Lake settlement. As a result, there is no examination of the importance of land and sense of place for Métis people in relation to the settlements. The literature also fails to discuss in any detail how the settlements' lands were chosen and to answer the following questions: Were there pre-existing communities? Were there specific relationships to those places?

The archival research I conducted reveals that some settlements were selected as ideal locations due to pre-existing Métis communities. This is especially true for Fishing Lake, and

²⁹ Bell, *Alberta's Metis Settlement Legislation*: 83.

Wolf Lake.³⁰ In fact, the earliest survey done by Métis Association of Alberta (MAA) reveals that Wolf Lake was requested as a site for a settlement in the early 1930s.³¹ While land was central to the creation of the Métis settlements, land ironically has become marginal in the academic discourses. By losing sight of the connection, people and families had to the land, we are also losing sight of the sense of belonging of Métis communities and Métis territoriality.

Sense of Place and Settler Colonialism

The concept of place has been analysed and approached by a range of disciplines from cultural geography, anthropology, history, to political science. Rooted in western epistemologies, land is viewed as a “thing” to possess. For Indigenous peoples and communities, land is not perceived as a “thing” humans impose themselves upon, but rather land and all living beings as an integral element to Indigenous peoples belonging to place. As set out by Aileen Moreton-Robinson, Indigenous peoples’ place, and home is understood through an ontological embodied relation to country.³² Moreton-Robinson furthers underscores the important difference between Indigenous connection to place, versus settlers’. She notes that “Indigenous people’s sense of home and place are configured differently to that of migrants. There is no other homeland that provides a point of origin, or place for multiple identities. Instead our rendering of place, home and country through our ontological relation to country is the basis of our ownership.”³³

³⁰ Ewing Commission, Department of Mines and Forestry report, Provincial Archives of Alberta, Accession No. 73.75, 3c. page 4. Note: Document indicates “Mr. Delorme in proposing and pressing strongly for this reservation [Location No.1 – Fishing Lake] stressed the fact that numerous families are located thereon, some having been there for a period of 20 years or more.”

³¹ Métis Association of Alberta survey, Provincial Archives of Alberta, Accession No. 73.75, 2a.

³² Moreton-Robinson, “I Still Call Australia Home”: 37.

³³ Ibid.

This is in stark contrast to how settlers view and interact with the land. In Canada, Prairie settlement studies, and settlers themselves, hinge on ‘ownership’ of land as part of their sense of belonging. For example, historian Frances Swyripa in *Storied Landscapes* in examining the ethno-religious immigrant identity on the Canadian Prairies notes that “Ownership of soil (especially on reserved tracts of land), family settlement, and the shared feat of pioneering fostered a sense of permanence and place and belonging...”³⁴ Settler history has viewed relationship to land as imposed, whereas the environment is manipulated in order to secure a sense of permanence and place. Place for settlers becomes romanticized, supported by a mythology of great and ‘shared feats’ to carve out ones place. Such western understanding of place has and is rendering Indigenous peoples homeless and in many cases invisible. It further has allowed for the dispossession and denial of such continued dispossession of its original inhabitants.

As pointed out by Aileen Moreton-Robinson, these settlers understanding of place deny the original dispossession, and continued dispossession, of Indigenous peoples.³⁵ Post-colonial studies such as Aileen Moreton-Robinson *The White Possessive: Property, Power and Indigenous Sovereignty*, Patrick Wolfe studies on race, colonialism and sovereignty, specifically his article “Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native,” and Sarah Ahmed’s *Uprootings/Regroundings: Questions of Home and Migration*, counter the colonial settler comforts in their “new” land.³⁶ These studies allow an unsettling of the possessive nature of land

³⁴ Frances Swyripa, *Storied landscapes: ethno-religious identity and the Canadian Prairies*, (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2010),: 10.

³⁵ Aileen Moreton-Robinson, *The White Possessive: Property, Power, and Indigenous Sovereignty*, (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 2015): 7.

³⁶ Patrick Wolfe, “Settler colonialism and the elimination of the native,” in *Journal of Genocide Research* , vol 8, no. 4. (December 2006), 387–409. Sara Ahmed, Claudia Castaneda, Anne-Marie Fortier and Mimi Sheller,

ownership, by revealing the interconnectedness of colonial ownership to the dispossession of Aboriginal peoples. These studies further highlight how colonialism not only dispossesses Indigenous peoples, but eliminate Indigenous presence from the land. They allow an understanding of colonial acts to dispossess and erase Indigenous peoples from the land, while emphasizing the important connection to place and land for Indigenous peoples.

Cultural geography, ethnography, and humanistic geography studies have examined place as a social process, how people and communities develop a sense of place, both as identity and physical markers on the land.³⁷ The most prominent study on sense of place is Edward Casey's *Getting Back into Place*, which analyses the importance of place in human experience and identity. In his examination of the development of place, Casey understands place as ushering us into what already is, that is "the environing subsoil of our embodiment, the bedrock of our being-in-the-world."³⁸ He argues that understanding what it means to be in place is necessary in order to combat lives as disoriented and displaced, as destabilized and dismayed.³⁹ Place, according to Casey, bestows a local habitation and a name by establishing a concrete situatedness in the common world whereas this "implacement" is as social as it is personal.

Studies such as Casey's, have been criticized as nostalgically romanticizing place and belonging.. Moreover, Casey's study is rooted in western understanding of place, whereas an

"Introduction: Uprootings/Regroundings: Questions of Home and Migration," in *Uprootings/Regroundings: Questions of Home and Migration*, ed. Sara Ahmed, Claudia Castaneda, Anne-Marie Fortier and Mimi Sheller. Oxford: Berg Publishers, 2003.

³⁷ Sara Ahmed, Claudia Castaneda, Anne-Marie Fortier and Mimi Sheller, "Introduction: Uprootings/Regroundings: Questions of Home and Migration," in *Uprootings/Regroundings: Questions of Home and Migration*, ed. Sara Ahmed, Claudia Castaneda, Anne-Marie Fortier and Mimi Sheller, (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 2003): 4.

³⁸ Edward S. Casey, *Getting Back into Place: Toward a Renewed Understanding of the Place-World*, second edition, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009): xvii.

³⁹ Ibid.

individual marks its place on the land, and thus forges implacement onto the land. Casey's study is an example of what Aileen Moreton-Robinson terms white possessiveness, that is not only in non-Indigenous possession of the land but also their imposing of their own narrative and histories upon the land, in turn erasing Indigenous presence. Other studies on the importance of place, like that of Michael Mayfield Bell, determines that literature on the importance of place is too preoccupied on memory: "The literature on collective memory, for example, has explored the "localization" and "topography," as Maurice Halbwachs termed it, of remembrance in monuments and historical sites; but here the focus has been on the social construction of memory, not place itself."⁴⁰ Much of these studies of place have emerged as settlers' try to understand their place in a land where they have no origin. Indigenous peoples existence function as a reminder that settlers' perceived sense of place is in fact only possible with the displacement of Indigenous peoples. Therefore, settler sense of place erases in order to reinforce their sense of belonging on a land that they deemed empty.

As settlement increased in western Canada at the end of the nineteenth century, and throughout the British Empire, settlers' sense of belonging began to develop at the expense of displaced Indigenous peoples. Studies of displacement and diaspora provide a lens to understanding the political, economic and social ramifications of contested histories and places. Ahmed, Castaneda, Fortier and Sheller's edited collection *Uprootings/Regroundings* challenges the assumption that movement involves freedom to do so.⁴¹ For Indigenous peoples facing settler

⁴⁰ Michael Mayerfield Bell, "The ghosts of place," *Theory and Society*, vol. 26: (1997): 814.

⁴¹ Ahmed, Castaneda, Fortier, and Sheller, "Introduction": 1.

colonialism, movement is no longer a choice, but rather is forced. Within post-colonial studies, migration cannot be understood without understanding relations of power.⁴²

Foucault's disciplinary punishment theoretical framework provides an understanding of how the Canadian government uses discipline as a mechanism to displace Métis people.⁴³ The government's articulation of power aims to create docile bodies, in order to control and regulate Aboriginal peoples. Government, whether Federal or Provincial, have dislodged and relocated Aboriginal peoples throughout Canada in order to access the natural resources, and make lands available to settlers who would properly use the land (i.e. agriculture). Historian Keith Smith, highlights the relocation and dispossession of Indigenous peoples by examining primary documents. Smith's *Strange Visitors* provides a glimpse of dispossession of Indigenous people across Canada throughout the nineteenth and twentieth century, including First Nations, Métis and Inuit. Smith created a guide on how to interpret primary documents, as a form of revisionist history; a tool that when employed with Indigenous worldview can yield untold stories and experiences of Indigenous peoples.

This framework for historical revisionism, through the re-evaluation and reinterpretation of the historical record, is useful in unearthing Indigenous experiences. Smith reiterates that Indigenous peoples were believed to be in the way of agricultural development, and that the lands where they resided were wanted for mining, forestry or other exploitations.⁴⁴ In the post

⁴² Ibid., 6.

⁴³ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, translated by Alan Sheridan. New York: Vintage Books, 1979.

⁴⁴ Keith D. Smith, *Strange Visitors: Documents In Indigenous-Settler Relations In Canada From 1876*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014): 256-257.

Second World War period, this displacement was largely implemented by drawing Aboriginal people into the bureaucratic world of compulsory education and welfare.⁴⁵ For instance, in 1953 the Canadian federal government devised an experiment to relocate Inuit communities in Québec to the High Arctic. The Federal government isolated the Inuit in order to exercise control over their movements, and resources.⁴⁶ According to Smith, the relocation of Inuit families in the 1950s was not unique but rather part of Canada's ongoing paternalistic effort to solve the Indigenous "problems", while simultaneously advancing Canada's interest (i.e. land, resource extraction).⁴⁷ Utilizing archives to reinterpret Indigenous peoples experiences, untold stories, and systems of oppression, reveals that settlers' sense of place is further supported and sustained by governments.

Whereas, settlers' view is making a living *off* the land, the Indigenous peoples view is making a living *with* the land.⁴⁸ The large body of literature on displacement articulates specific groups of people's experiences, for example Jewish diaspora, forced migration in Columbia, and Palestinian exile.⁴⁹ This body of literature scrutinizes migration, and the movement of people or groups out of necessity or force, and the impacts of these movements on bodies, families,

⁴⁵ See Geoffrey York, *The Dispossessed: Life and Death in Native Canada*, (London: Vintage U.K., 1990), 4; Hugh Shewell. *Enough to Keep them Alive: Indian welfare in Canada, 1873-1965*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004 and Kerry M. Abel, *Drum Songs: Glimpses of Dene History*. Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993.

⁴⁶ Alan Rudolph Marcus, *Relocating Eden: The Image and Politics of Inuit Exile in the Canadian Arctic*, (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1995): 3.

⁴⁷ Smith, *Strange Visitors*: 257.

⁴⁸ Elmer Ghostkeeper, *Spirit Gifting: The Concept of Spiritual Exchange*, 2nd ed., (Raymond, Alta.: Writing on Stone Press, 2007): 71-73.

⁴⁹ See Pilar Riano-Alcala, "Journeys and landscapes of forced migration: Memorializing fear among refugees and internally displaced Colombians." *Social Anthropology* 16, no. 1: 1-18, and Gannit Ankori, "'Dis-Orientalisms': Displaced Bodies/Embodied Displacements in Contemporary Palestinian Art," in *Uprootings/Regroundings: Questions of Home and Migration*. Edited by Sara Ahmed, Claudia Castaneda, Anne-Marie Fortier and Mimi Sheller, 59-90 (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 2003).

relations, communities and nations.⁵⁰ In Canada, displacement studies encompass forced internment such as Japanese internment camps, and forced removal, such as the Inuit removal to the north.⁵¹ Of the literature on displacement, and connection to place, few, if any, have considered Métis connection to place and the impact of displacement on their sense of place and belonging to the land.

Before going further in discussing the importance of Métis place, it is important that I first establish terminology and clarification around the concept of community. The *Powley* Supreme Court decision (2003) defined Métis community as "...a group of Métis with a distinctive collective identity, living together in the same geographic area and sharing a common way of life."⁵² The ramifications of the *Powley* decision can be understood by its failure to link the collective identity and geography to historic Métis communities. According to Chris Andersen, *Powley* "radically narrows the scale by which we can understand the historical social, economic, and political networks within which Métis acted during the era in question (approximately the 1850s)."⁵³ These sites formed part of a larger network of Métis communities with collective traditions tied to social, economic, and cultural aspects of Métis peoplehood. These Métis communities, woven from common values based on kinship and reciprocity, continued to adhere to Métis diplomatic traditions in their hunting and trapping practices, and

⁵⁰ See Sarah Ahmed, Claudia Castaneda, Anne-Marie Fortier, and Mimi Sheller, *Uprootings/Regroundings: Questions of Home and Migration*. Edited by Sara Ahmed, Claudia Castaneda, Anne-Marie Fortier and Mimi Sheller, 59-90 (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 2003).

⁵¹ See Mona Oikawa, *Cartographies of Violence: Japanese Canadian Women, Memory and the Subjects of Internment*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012; Roy Miki, *Redress: Inside the Japanese Canadian Call for Justice*. Vancouver: Raincoast Books, 2004; Alan Rudolph Marcus, *Out In the Cold: The Legacy of Canada's Inuit Relocation Experiment in the High Arctic*. Copenhagen, Denmark: International Work Group on Indigenous Affairs, 1992, and Alan Rudolph Marcus, *Relocating Eden: The Image and Politics of Inuit Exile in the Canadian Arctic*. Hanover: University Press of New England, 1995.

⁵² *R. v. Powley*, (2003) 2 SCR 207, paragraph 12.

⁵³ Chris Andersen, *Métis: Race, Recognition, and the Struggle for Indigenous Peoplehood*, (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2014): 138.

sustained a collective Métis community. These communities were not isolated but rather were connected through vast kinship networks to other Métis communities.

The Importance of the “Métis Way of doing things”

The research aims to centre Métis ways of knowing and making a living with the land as an important element to claiming Métis territoriality. This study is framed through a Métis traditional world view, which Métis elder Elmer Ghostkeeper calls the “Métis way of doing things” that is a Métis way of making a living with the land.⁵⁴ This Métis worldview is centred on our relationship with the land, with all living and non-living beings. As an Indigenous research perspective, “Métis way of doing things” informs all aspects of our existence. With recent court decisions discussions surrounding Métis hunting rights (Powley in 2003) and land claims (Manitoba Métis Federation vs. Canada in 2013) have highlighted important Métis hunting, fishing and trapping territories.⁵⁵ These Métis activities are a reflection of the important economic activities that re-inforce Métis connection to land. Often Métis economic activities are studied out of context, which fails to consider the layered experiences of Métis way of doing.

As pointed out by Isabel Altamirano-Jiménez and Nathalie Kermoal in their study of Indigenous women’s understanding of place, “the practical dimensions of Indigenous knowledge... has had the effect of decontextualizing it from the social, economic, political,

⁵⁴ Ghostkeeper, *Spirit Gifting*: 1 and 9-12.

⁵⁵ *R. v. Powley*, (2003) 2 SCR 207. and *Manitoba Métis Federation vs. Canada*, (2013) 1 SCR 263.

environmental, and cultural processes in which it is embedded.”⁵⁶ Studying one aspect of Métis connection to place, either hunting or trapping or fishing, thus decontextualizes the importance of these activities to all the other aspects of Métis knowledge and way of life, such as the importance of these activities to social aspects of Métis life, to strengthen family kinship through sharing of meat, or the important cultural processes of gathering together, sharing stories, picking medicines and berries, and preparing of food.

In her study of Métis women’s knowledge of the land, and their complex relationship to land, Nathalie Kermoal introduces the concept of multidimensional knowledge whereas: “Métis women’s knowledge of the land is multidimensional since the traditional knowledge pertaining to the use of plants, rhizomes, and berries has many more layers than what is seen on the surface. . . it is concerned with Indigenous ontologies that stress the interconnectedness of all beings (humans and non-humans). It has spiritual, economic, cultural, environmental, medicinal, and political purposes and meanings.”⁵⁷ Thus, understanding Métis connection to place requires acknowledging all aspects of Métis way of making a living, as all aspects of Métis way of life are interconnected. With this in mind, I strived in my methodology to begin by situating myself, to make meaning of archives as a way of re-membering and connecting the layered aspects of Métis way of life.

Studying a single economic activity outside of its larger context does not recognize the layered experiences of Métis connection to place. Making a living with the land means using

⁵⁶ Nathalie Kermoal and Isabel Altamirano-Jiménez, “Introduction,” *Living on the Land: Indigenous Women’s Understanding of Place*, ed. Nathalie Kermoal and Isabel Altamirano-Jiménez, (Edmonton: Athabasca Press, 2016): 3.

⁵⁷ Kermoal, “Métis Women’s Environmental Knowledge and the Recognition of Métis Rights”: 129.

gifts such as plants and animals for food, and medicinal purposes. For Ghostkeeper, there is a reciprocal exchange in spirit gifting, which is done through a gift exchange with plants and animals.⁵⁸ An exchange occurs, whereas an offering is given typically in the form of tobacco or food.⁵⁹ Such practice reinforces concepts that Métis peoples' connection to place is not based only on economic activities, or economic connection to the land. Indeed, the connection goes deeper, and is much more layered, than is often perceived.

Framing the research from a Métis world view, can situate the importance of a reciprocal relationship with land for Métis people. As noted by Kermoal, this connection has "... spiritual, economic, cultural, environmental, medicinal, and political purposes and meanings."⁶⁰ Keith Basso's concept of "sensing place" which he describes as an attitude of enduring affinity with known localities and the ways of life they sponsor, helps to understand Wolf Lake as an important Métis place, as a community responsive to changes, which adapted to an ever-changing environment, and ultimately as a place that went through the painful experience of relocation.⁶¹ Considering the story of Wolf Lake and its displacement has been rendered invisible, such that no literature exists on the community and the sources are limited (as discussed further below). The challenge thus lies in finding ways to render this community visible.

⁵⁸ Ghostkeeper, *Spirit Gifting*: 11.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁶⁰ Kermoal, "Métis Women's Environmental Knowledge and the Recognition of Métis Rights": 129.

⁶¹ Keith H. Basso, *Wisdom Sits in Place: Landscape and Language Among the Western Apache*, (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996): 144 and 145.

As Linda Tuhiwai Smith suggests the process of remembering or re-membering “in terms of connecting bodies with place and experiences.”⁶² To provide such “re-membering” is to stitch back together places, memories, and experiences that have become physically severed from place – from the land. To render the community visible, a critical rereading and of the history of that time and the indigenous presence in the making of this history is necessary.⁶³ Rendering these histories of forced displacement visible challenges narratives that erase Indigenous histories, and enables a platform by which Indigenous histories and relations to the land may be reframed.

⁶² Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, second edition, (London: Zed Books, 2012): 147.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 150.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Methodology is the approach, the chosen technique or the reason for selecting a set of methods when conducting research.⁶⁴ The aim of the study is to centre Métis ways of knowing and relating to the land as important elements to reclaiming Métis territoriality. While simultaneously re-scripting and de-stabilizing the settler colonial notion of land. This study documents the former community of Wolf Lake and its interconnectivity of Métis knowledge, and way of life with specific places on the land. Archival work as a methodology allows rendering visible through documents and tangible maps and photographs a community that has been completely displaced. I also apply a Métis way of knowing, thinking, relating and being, and as such insert myself as a part of an Indigenous methodology.

Situating Self

I start by situating myself, my story, and how I have come to understand my experience with connection to place. It is here where I first answer the question, to who I belong. In

⁶⁴ Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*: ix.

Mohawk academic Patricia Monture-Angus' book *Thunder in My Soul: A Mohawk Women Speaks*, she discusses how academic writing functions on the rule that the writer does not identify their voice.⁶⁵ From this standpoint, the knowledge is outside of one's self. Monture-Angus resists this process as it goes against her cultural practices that taught her that to not speak of "me" is a violation, whereas the only true knowledge she has is from herself, her own experience.⁶⁶

In reflecting on Monture-Angus' writing, I came to realize the value of identifying myself in my writing, and specifically from my own experiences and understanding of Métis culture and place. I am aware that understanding grows through experience. As an Indigenous person, and as presented by Monture-Angus, knowledge is not outside of oneself, but rather my understanding of connection to place is part of my own experience. It is a connection to the specific localities, places, physical geographies, where we live and in which our ancestors have lived. As stated by Cora Weber-Pilwax, the connection to people is not to people in general or to a collectivity, but to specific individuals, with real faces, personalities, histories, and identities.⁶⁷

I am Métis, originally from Hoey, Saskatchewan, a small rural community nestled between St. Louis and Batoche. I often joke that people from my community do not actually know my first name, but rather know my mother, father, and grandparents. The all-important question of "A qui t'appartient?" or "To whom do you belong?" is a reflection of the important

⁶⁵ Patricia Monture-Angus, and Brenda Conroy, *Thunder In My Soul: A Mohawk Woman Speaks*, (Halifax, N.S.: Fernwood Pub., 1995): 44-45.

⁶⁶ Monture-Angus and Conroy, *Thunder in My Soul*: 44. See also: Kathleen E. Absolon, *Kaandosowin: How We Come To Know*; and Kim Anderson, *A Recognition of Being: Reconstructing Native Womanhood*. Toronto: Sumach Press, 2000.

⁶⁷ Cora Weber-Pillwax, "Indigenous Researchers and Indigenous Research Methods: Cultural Influences or Cultural Determinants of Research Methods," in *Pimatisiwin: A Journal of Aboriginal and Indigenous Community Health* vol. 2 no. 1, (Spring 2004): 88-89.

kinship ties that are embedded in such a question. They were placing me in a larger web of relations. “To who do you belong”... I belong to the Métis community of St. Louis and Batoche, Saskatchewan, I belong to the Lépine, Boucher, and Bremner families. My father is French Canadian from Hoey and St. Louis.

My fondest memories often start with the South Saskatchewan River, and along what locally was known as the “river road”. This road wound itself alongside the river, and was the original road established and used by the Métis connecting Batoche to St. Louis to the north east, and to Fish Creek to the south. If you look close enough, the old river lots are still visible. As a child I remember stopping at homes along the river road to visit friends and neighbours; homes more like shacks often with no running water that always provided hospitality, and as a child, this meant cookies. I recall picking berries in summer, swimming and fishing along the South Saskatchewan River, all the while visiting with family. The area where I frolicked as a child, visiting, and swimming was a place that my Métis ancestors made a living according to their customs and values. And as such, a place they fought for in the Resistance of 1885.

The farm where I was raised was the same place where my Métis grandmother grew up, where my great-grandfather Norman Morrison, and great-grandmother Auxille Lépine raised their family. Both my great-grandparents were Métis; my great-grandmother Auxille’s father, grandfather and grandmothers were implicated in the Resistance of 1885 as well as the Resistance of 1869-70 in Red River. My great great grandfather Maxime Lépine Sr., along with his brother Ambroise Lépine, served on Riel’s provisional government in Manitoba in 1869. Maxime fought tirelessly for Métis rights, and according to Louis Riel: “I have more confidence

in him,” he declared to Father Alexis André, “than in all the priests, all the bishops, and the pope.”⁶⁸

In 1874, Maxime was an elected member of the Manitoba Legislature for the riding of St. François Xavier, but left in 1878 for St. Louis de Langevin, Saskatchewan, due to the influx of settlers. Owing to the threat of losing their lands in Batoche and St. Louis, Maxime was implicated along with other Métis to draft and sign petitions to the government. In 1885, he served as a councillor on Riel’s “Exovedate” or the little provisional government of Saskatchewan, and along with his two sons fought at the Battle of Batoche and Tourond’s Coulee (Fish Creek) in 1885. Following the resistance, Maxime was imprisoned for high treason against the Crown and served his sentenced in the Stony Mountain Penitentiary in Manitoba. According to Howard Adams, who like myself is a descendent of Maxime Lépine, once captured Maxime refused to answer any questions to officials regarding the resistance, even after soldiers threatened to use “persuasive tactics”.⁶⁹

I knew none of this history, or the history of other relations’ stories such as Caroline (L’espérance) Boucher for whom my mother is named after, Marguerite Boucher, or Maxime Lépine Junior. I was not taught about the Resistance of 1885 by my family, I was not taught that the trails, river, and land that was so familiar to me, and which my ancestors fought to retain, had once belonged to Métis families. The stories of the place and people, intrinsically tied to the

⁶⁸ Diane Payment, “LÉPINE, MAXIME,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 12, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed April 22, 2017, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/lepine_maxime_12E.html.

⁶⁹ Howard Adams, *Prison of Grass: Canada From a Native Point of View*, Rev. ed. (Saskatoon: Fifth House, 1989): 98-99.

importance of the land, was obscured into invisibility. The stories of the people, our stories, and the importance of our connection to those places became muted along the way through a shame borne in many families after 1885. My family like others, hid their Métis culture, stories, and traditions. Shame functions to silence, and to render our histories and values invisible. Through the thesis research I have come to re-member my own history and attachment to place. It is one of the many reasons I chose to make visible stories rendered invisible, and the connection to significant Métis places.

Re-Membering the Value of Métis Place

Hiding our culture, our history, and our stories was an attempt to safeguard a future for me, one that did not encounter the realities of that place. But nonetheless, the land told me a different story, and continues to do so. Those old trails, the river road, and all the abundance of food and joy in my experience are embedded in the land. More recently something is pulling at me not to forget, to not forget that place. As Kim Anderson has pointed out “at some point our loss makes itself known, and it can be a heavy realization.”⁷⁰ For me the loss was two-folds, first that so much of my Métis culture and teachings had been kept from me, whereas they had been rendered invisible due to family shame, and the master narrative which failed to capture the depth of Métis peoples and communities. And second, that the loss of those teachings were entrancingly tied to the land, and as such the connection to the land was also lost.

When we forget the land from where we come, we forget ourselves. Not only do we get lost, we also lose the memories of those places. If we forget, whether through displacement or

⁷⁰ Kim Anderson, *A Recognition of Being: Reconstructing Native Womanhood*, (Toronto: Sumach Press, 2000): 24.

otherwise, we lose the meaning of our Métis culture, traditions and values, whereas other people will gladly impose meaning on us. White settler culture has no more pull – their culture has ceased to exist for them – and now they attempt to claim our indigeneity.⁷¹ It is imperative to regain consciousness in order to reclaim our values, traditions, and pride in the land that has not forgotten us. As Kim Anderson notes “we carry the memory of our ancestors in our physical being”, and our ancestors both living and non-living continue to embody the land. Just as we remember the land, the land also remembers us. My story is not unique, many Métis families and communities stories and history were rendered invisible. In retelling and re-examining the importance of Métis places, I hope to make visible not only the injustices that occurred at Wolf Lake but also the intelligence and traditions of Métis families and communities borne from their connection to specific places.

Importance of Place

The methodology that guides the study is the importance of specific places that continue to remember us, based on generations of reciprocal relationships. These places were significant to Métis peoples due to the tangible and intangible relations fostered through reciprocal exchange. For example, tangible activities such as hunting, trapping, fishing, gathering (plants, berries, etc.) and gardening, made possible through intangible respectful protocols in ceremony and traditions with the land. In return the land shaped our Métis traditions, and governance systems. As Coll Thrush brings forth in his article “Hauntings as histories”, locations have

⁷¹ Circe Sturm, *Becoming Indian: The Struggle over Cherokee Identity in the Twenty-first Century*, (Sante Fe: School for Advanced Research Press, 2010): 10.

identity and agency - they have meaning and volition.⁷² These locations are continuously acting upon lives of human peoples.⁷³ These locations are like ghosts, they continuously haunt us – remaining invisible, but yet always there.

However, Michael Mayfield Bell’s article “The Ghosts of Place,” the methodology that places remember and know who we are is “... in the broader sense of a felt presence - an anima, geist, or genius – that possesses and gives a sense of social aliveness to a place . . . they are nevertheless a familiar and often homey part of our lives.”⁷⁴ Basso emphasizes the value of place: “a place animates the ideas and feelings of persons who attend to them, these same ideas and feelings animate the places on which attention has been bestowed.”⁷⁵ The land itself holds its own memories, when Indigenous peoples return to their traditional territories, the land remembers them, just as we remember it. According to Bell, “the ghosts of place should not be reduced to mere memories, collective or individual. To do so would be to overlook the spirited and live quality of their presence, and their stubborn rootedness in particular places.”⁷⁶

For Indigenous peoples, places not only live within our own memories but are a part of our identity. Those places on the land are not empty, they are places where Métis complex networks and systems were rooted. Not only by situating our experience within the context of our own shared memories, but also the land’s memory of us, further influences understanding the importance of Métis places. The land and water are filled with spirits, in specific places

⁷² Coll Thrush, “Hauntings as Histories: Indigenous Ghosts and the Urban Past in Seattle,” in *Phantom Past, Indigenous Presence: Native Ghosts in North American Culture & History*, ed. Colleen E. Boyd and Coll Thrush, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2011): 54.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Bell, “The ghosts of place”: 815-816.

⁷⁵ Basso, *Wisdom Sits in Place*: 107.

⁷⁶ Bell, “The ghosts of place”: 816.

where our ancestors fostered reciprocal relationships with the land. It is those places, it is those lands that remember and know us, know who we are.

Métis worldview rooted in what Elmer Ghostkeeper calls “making a living with the land” is based on the sacred relationship with the land, and its plants, and animals⁷⁷. It is perpetually in conflict with secular worldviews, which views the land as a “thing”. Understanding the conflict between these two worldviews will further our understanding of government’s ability to dispossess Métis people from their traditional land, and to exploit resources. Ownership of land, and exploitation of its resources is essential to Canadian colonial expansion. Essential to this expansion required determining one’s true character by returning to the land, and fulfil the colonial dream of private property.⁷⁸ It is through development and “proper” use of the land, meaning not hunting, fishing or trapping, that one’s true character emerges, and the character of the nation bellows forth.

An example of this is the development of agriculture. Examined in an Australian context, Aileen Moreton-Robinson argues that Australian nationalism rooted in Britishness and colonization is constructed through white possession. As British settlers arrived in Australia a “new white property-owning subject emerged in history and possessiveness became embedded in everyday discourse as “a firm belief that the best in life is the expansion of self through property.”⁷⁹ This phenomenon of possession is similarly echoed in the Canadian experience of colonisation, which works to possess land and exploit it, in return necessitates dispossessing

⁷⁷ Ghostkeeper, *Spirit Gifting*: 53-54, and 69.

⁷⁸ Daniel Coleman, *White Civility: The Literary Project of English Canada*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006): 112.

⁷⁹ Moreton-Robinson, *The White Possessive*: 49.

Aboriginal peoples from their traditional territories. In addition to displacement, colonial possessions proceed to erase Indigenous presence and history from the land. Bringing these erased Indigenous narrative to light, necessitates first restoring their visibility. The first step in uprooting colonial narratives to expose the prevailing Indigenous narrative is to investigate the land and places where erasure occurred. Specifically, to study these erasures in situ, on the ground where they transpired. It requires making visible that which colonial systems and practices erased and rendered invisible.

Archives from a Métis Lens

Archival records, whether written documents or unwritten archives such as maps and photographs, can function as a mechanism to confirm the existence of a community and place – the process of re-membering. The written records, or archival holdings, are typically characterized as representative of a colonial history. These records are primarily those of white anglo-saxon men, and their legacies whether political, social or other. Rarely are women, minority groups, or Indigenous peoples’ voices present in the record. Rather these individuals and groups are often written about, rather than narrators of their history and stories. According to Alice Te Punga Somerville, archives are places where things, people and ideas come together.⁸⁰ The archives often present certain spaces as “bare” whereas Indigenous histories are presented as “vanished Indians” and communities as simple and disappearing. In the case of my study on Wolf Lake, bare translates into few records that reveal the complex nature of a Métis community. But according to Alice Te Punga Somerville when it comes to bare spaces in the archives we have the capacity (and responsibility) to insist there are names of cousins, fathers

⁸⁰ Alice Te Punga Somerville, “I do still have a letter”: our sea of archives, in *Sources and Methods In Indigenous Studies*, ed. Chris Andersen, and Jean M. O'Brien, (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2017): 121.

and brothers.⁸¹ Using archives allows viewing spaces as ones of presence, relationships, and fullness rather than one of absence, and bareness.⁸²

According to Keith Smith primary sources do not provide neutral unfiltered windows into the past, but nonetheless the “whispers, and even the shouts, of Indigenous people can still be heard through the written documents left behind.”⁸³ Archives can in fact be useful in uncovering governments (federal, provincial, municipal, etc.) and church attitudes, and the systems that functioned to disinherit Indigenous peoples. Government and church archives provide an unfiltered window where we may glance into, and understand the mechanisms that disinherit. Moreover, when reading documents against the grain, they can also reveal the experiences and voices of Indigenous peoples and communities. These untold stories function to challenge the predominant narratives that erase Indigenous peoples’ presence, history and connection to land. For Smith “reading against the grain to uncover what is left unsaid can give a voice to people reduced to silence and highlights events that have often been ignored.”⁸⁴ It allows making bare or empty spaces – such as the general narrative that Wolf Lake was a settlement and suddenly closed – visible by naming those that were there, and also their experiences, their stories.

Employing primary source mechanism, such as reading against the grain, can allow these stories and voices to emerge in order to revise and bring to light Indigenous histories. Archival holdings are deemed colonial, with few or no Indigenous or Métis voices present. Archives are created, selected, accessioned and labelled and made available, but it is important to realize they

⁸¹ Somerville, “I do still have a letter”: 124.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Keith Smith, Introduction, xix

⁸⁴ Ibid.

are a social construction. As highlighted by Joan Shwartz and Terry Cook: “Their origins lie in the information needs and social values of the rulers, governments, businesses, associations, and individuals who establish and maintain them.”⁸⁵ Although Jim Daschuk’s study *Clearing the Plains*, and his revelation that using archives in 2006 may seem an anachronism, it nonetheless allows contextualization and understanding of larger patterns.⁸⁶

I would further argue that using archives may also allow contextualizing whiteness that is, understanding how whiteness functions as “...a dominant representational source through which Western societies produce and consume Indigeneity.”⁸⁷ In examining how whiteness functions within the archives, that is to say how government records written about Métis peoples and communities tend to ignore our density, it is then possible to understand how whiteness functions to dispossess Indigenous peoples from their land. Whiteness thus consumes Indigeneity by erasing to replace with a different narrative. The archives are thus useful tools that allow revealing what Chris Andersen believes anchors Indigenous studies, that it is rooted in Indigenous density: “The temporal and epistemological complexity of our relationships with whitestream society means that Indigenous studies must counter hegemonic representations of Indigeneity which marginalise or altogether ignore our density.”⁸⁸ Once the nature of whiteness, which functions to reduce Indigeneity to something simple, is identified, it is possible to reveal the density of our communities.

⁸⁵ John M. Schwartz and Terry Cook, “Archives, Records and Power: The Making of Modern Memory,” in *Archival Science*, vol 2 (2002): 3.

⁸⁶ James Daschuk, “Some Reflections of my Own on *Clearing the Plains*: A Panel Discussion,” *Journal of the CHA Canadian Historical Association*, vol 26, no. 2 (2015): 73-74.

⁸⁷ Chris Andersen, “Critical Indigenous Studies: From Difference to Density,” in *Cultural Studies Review*, vol. 15, no. 2 (September 2009): 81.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 82.

For example, the government employed surveyors to assess the land around Wolf Lake in 1911 and 1916 for its value in terms of establishing an agrarian settler community, but also for its natural resources. The survey mapped an array of trails in the area – viewing them as transportation mechanisms, for example winter trail, wagon trail, or pack trail. A surveyor, employed by the government to consume Indigenous territory by surveying a western grid system onto the land, does not recognize the density of the community, which developed those trails. The trails reveal Métis long standing Indigenous knowledge, one based on seasonal movements, and long standing kinship networks (i.e. trail to St. Paul des Métis) – that are not simple modes of transportation but revelation of the dense nature of Indigenous knowledge systems.

Archives can also uncover Indigenous agency and action.⁸⁹ In studying Métis history in the twentieth century it is important to recognize that Métis individuals did write – they created records, and as such an Indigenous intellectual history. James Brady, Métis leader and founder of the MAA, wrote extensively. His correspondence with other MAA members, and general daily journal logs of activities at Wolf Lake are available at the Glenbow Archives. Centering the writings of Brady functions to centre Indigenous intellectual work as living proof of Indigenous agency.⁹⁰ According to Robert Warrior in his article “Intellectual History and Indigenous Methodology,” histories of Indigenous intellectual work are synonymous with Native studies methods.⁹¹ For Warrior it is a form of self-reflexive critique of writing, but also a method to

⁸⁹ Smith, *Strange Visitors*, Introduction: XIX.

⁹⁰ Robert Warrior, “Intellectual History and Indigenous Methodology,” in *Sources and Methods In Indigenous Studies*, ed. Chris Andersen, and Jean M. O'Brien, (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2017): 95 and 98.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 94.

uncovering Indigenous agents of history expressing their agency through their ideas.⁹² Brady's writings allow unraveling his agency through his ideas but also the life and the issues the Métis living at Wolf Lake encountered in the 1940s. Métis voices can be heard not only in the written documents they produce but also in newspaper articles, where a former Wolf Lake member discussed the settlement closure. Their voices also come through in local histories, which documented local residence experience in a specific area. In a Lac La Biche local history, a Maggie Desjarlais provided her story of her families trapping and fishing patterns. Other archives such as trapline legislation and maps reveal shrinking trapping territory. They simultaneously reveal Métis voices, as these documents can tell us of changing conditions, which impacted their activities on the land. In 1954, the Federal and Provincial governments developed the Primrose Lake Air Weapons Range, a large tract of land set aside for the testing of bombs and other military needs. The Range abutted Wolf Lake, eventually cancelling or reducing registered traplines, but also traditional trapping areas. Looking to the past, through the archives, can allow understanding of government motivations (whiteness) such as the impetus to disinherit Indigenous peoples from their lands, culture and tradition. Rather than focus entirely on government actions, the study first concentrates and emphasizes the Métis way of making a living with the land, and the activities that created valuable connections to place. In doing so, we can also reveal the importance of those places for Métis communities and peoples, and how government actions harmed, and attempted to sever those relationships.

⁹² Ibid., 98.

Data Collection & Re-Inserting Wolf Lake on the Métis Map

Engaging in archival research is not simply finding documents that support ones research question, rather it requires knowledge and understanding of the very nature of archives, and in doing so thus challenging the whiteness of the archives. Firstly it is important to realize that archives are constructed – documents are first vetted. For example a government ministry identifies records and holds back any documents deemed confidential or of a sensitive nature, other documents perhaps of the day-to-day administration of the ministry, will be deemed to have no historical value, and not end up in the archives at all. According to Schwartz and Cook, the danger is: “scholars using archives without realizing the heavy layers of intervention and meaning coded into the records by their creators and by archivists long before any box is opened in the research room.”⁹³

My search for understanding of the Wolf Lake closure, and the community’s displacement began in the Provincial Alberta Archives; the repository for Alberta government ministry documents. The Provincial archives provided a vast amount of documentation on the Ewing Commission inquiry and its reports, such as findings on the conditions and logistics of establishing Métis settlements, and monitoring of settlement activities. Specifically, I wanted to find government discussions regarding the closing of Wolf Lake, and the final reasoning for doing so. There was a general lack of records regarding Wolf Lake, and after further inquiries with the archivist, I soon discovered that due to long standing litigation all records pertaining to Wolf Lake were in litigation hold. The significance of a litigation hold has resulted in my inability to access and thus view these documents while the litigation remained in place. As such,

⁹³ Schwartz and Cook, “Archives, Records and Power”: 6.

I had to work around this barrier, and reassess my archival strategy. In digging further, I revealed other important government documentation aside from the reports around the Ewing Commission. Government employed surveyors in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century to assess and survey lands for settlement purposes, as well as natural resource potentials. Surveyor reports documented specific regions, their capacity for agriculture, timber and water resources. Surveyors also mapped certain areas, and existing features such as trails. I examined Catholic Oblates records located in the Provincial Archives of Alberta, primarily correspondence among the Oblates themselves, which revealed an interest in establishing a Catholic mission at Wolf Lake (one following a similar model as Green Lake, Saskatchewan).⁹⁴ Oblate correspondence can reveal the nature of a community's activities, i.e. general daily life. Furthermore, Oblate records also included maps of the St. Paul des Métis colony, which connected some of the names from St. Paul to those at Wolf Lake. I was able to access the Métis Nation of Alberta fonds at the Glenbow Archives in Calgary, but once again I encountered a lack of records existing around Wolf Lake, and even documents from the time frame of the closure generally. James Brady's fonds proved beneficial since he was the supervisor at Wolf Lake during the 1940s, and had meticulously documented his time on the settlement. Brady's daily log of Wolf Lake provides a picture of the daily life at Wolf Lake, the relationships between families, the activities such as trapping and growing gardens, and the economic pursuits of the area such as an attempt to create a timber co-operative.

The findings of this study are based on the stitching together of available written records, but also by expanding the definition of documentation by including maps and photographs.

⁹⁴ Letter Fr. E. Lacombe to Fr. Routhier, March 6, 1942. Provincial Archives of Alberta, Oblates Archives PR1971.0220, file 8194.

Concurrently photographs function as physical markers of the lives of peoples at Wolf Lake, while maps can reveal patterns of land change over a period of time. Maps and photographs can reveal tangible realities. In examining the history of residential schools, J.R. Miller discovered the existing literature's shortcomings, which failed to depict Native roles and realities in residential schooling.⁹⁵ Miller expands his definition of documentation by examining photographs to grasp the residential school experiences. In many cases the written records only reveal fragmented accounts, especially when there is a shortage of records. In the case of my research, many of the government records on Wolf Lake were not accessible to the general public as they are held in litigation hold. In such an instance, I followed Miller's process and expanded the definition of documentation, to multiply lines and techniques of inquiry.⁹⁶ The maps I reviewed were created by government surveyors who were sent throughout western Canada to survey lands for settlement, while assessing soil conditions for agriculture, and natural resource potential. These maps are significant as they also reveal existing trails and communities. The survey maps for Wolf Lake clearly capture winter trails, wagon trails, and pack trails. These trails reveal the seasonal occupation of the region as early as 1911 and 1916. The trails also reveal the existent community networks such as the "trail [from Wolf Lake] to St. Paul des Métis." Another survey maps shows the survey of the Wolf Lake area according to the government survey grid of townships, ranges and quarter sections of land. In Brady's fonds, a list of Wolf Lake members also indicates the legal land description of each member's location at Wolf Lake. In using the legal land location I was able to plot each member's location of residence at Wolf Lake. In creating a map that indicates where each residence is located I was

⁹⁵ J.R. Miller, "Reading Photographs, Reading Voices: Documenting the History of Native Residential Schools," in *Reading Beyond Words: Context for Native History*, eds. Jennifer S.H. Brown and Elizabeth Vibert, (Petreborough, Ontario: Broadview Press, 1996): 461.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*: 465 and 479.

then able to make broader connections to families and social relations among Wolf Lake members. For example, two members with different last names who were both former St. Paul des Métis members relocated to Wolf Lake and took up land next to each other. Others resident locations at Wolf Lake indicate the importance of being near family. Not only do these maps evidence the existence of the Métis community at Wolf Lake, but also the social networks. The locations also indicate economic activities – while some residents established themselves south of the lake where it was recorded to have areas for crop raising, other residents established themselves to the north of the Lake near to their traplines. Other government maps such as a trap line maps, analyzed in connection to hunting regulations, provide evidence of the shrinking territory of the Métis at Wolf Lake in the 1950s. By examining the survey trail maps which indicate the seasonal patterns and networks to other Métis communities (i.e. St. Paul des Métis), along with the exact residency patterns of members, and finally the trap line map from the 1950s, the sources begin to reveal a community profile based on seasonal activities, social and kinship networks, and the impact of government trap line regulations. Trap line areas were increasingly impeded with restrictions starting in the 1930s, but also in the Wolf Lake region by the newly created Primrose Air Weapons Range in 1954, which reduced and eliminated trap line areas. In examining these regulations it is then possible to see the legislation that altered and impacted the Wolf Lake community.

Methodology Limitations

Written records allow for the uncovering of the development of a Métis community, the Indigenous knowledge that supported the community via its kinship networks (use of maps in the research), its diplomatic traditions (trapping practices documented in Brady's supervisor reports),

and daily life rooted in making a living with the land.⁹⁷ Although archival sources allow the study to bring forth both the nature of whiteness to displace and harm Indigenous communities, and the value of Indigenous knowledge, the written records also have limitations. The first limitation associated with Métis research generally is the difficulty to document a community's day-to-day activities. Fur trade and post records generate a business and transactional history, one often associated with the corporate history of the different fur trade companies. Although these documents may provide a snap shot of community, those that frequently traded at the post, or were in proximity, they rarely provide community profiles. Fur trade documents were however useful in establishing a relative time period of free traders in the Wolf Lake area, by examining fur trade routes and trading posts. The nearest trading post to Wolf Lake was at Lac La Biche, which was directly connected via waterways (i.e. creeks, and rivers). Another limitation was the restricted access to government files regarding Wolf Lake due to the litigation hold. Although I was unable to access certain documents, I was nonetheless able to use some available government documents. The records regarding the Ewing Commission were useful in establishing the reasoning for selecting Wolf Lake – that is a request was made by Isadore Desjarlais of Wolf Lake to have the lands allotted as there was a community in the area, but little else is mentioned regarding Wolf Lake residents.⁹⁸ The research study relied on piecing together maps, photographs, local histories, and writings by James Brady, supervisor at Wolf Lake. The most significant limitation of all of the archival records are they fail to highlight the response of

⁹⁷ Diplomatic traditions is based on Métis scholar Adam Gaudry's definition "This Indigenous diplomatic universe possessed a common, international political language, based on the symbolism of kinship, which determined how families, bands, and nations were to behave towards one another. It was through this system, too, that non-Indigenous outsiders were able to situate themselves in the prairie political universe, using Indigenous protocols and traditions to do so." See Adam Gaudry, "Kaa-tipeyimishoyaahk - 'We are those who own ourselves': A Political History of Métis Self-Determination in the North-West, 1830-1870," Phd Dissertation, (Victoria: University of Victoria, 2014): 135. See Robert Alexander Innes, *Elder Brother and the Law of the People: Contemporary Kinship and Cowessess First Nation*. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2013.

⁹⁸ Métis Association of Alberta survey, Provincial Archives of Alberta, Accession No. 73.75, 2a.

Wolf Lake members to external pressures to close the settlement. A newspaper article, which includes an interview with a Wolf Lake member, Isadore Desjarlais, does shine some light on the impacts of the settlement closure, but does not reveal the efforts or reactions of the members from the discovery that the settlement was to be closed, and their actions toward the closure. Furthermore, the written records do not indicate where people went after its closure, did they move to other settlements or towns/cities? Oral interviews with former Wolf Lake members would shed light on the reaction and after effects of the Wolf Lake closure in 1960. In addition, oral interviews can provide knowledge on the impacts of the closure for Métis families, and their Métis way of life that was fostered at Wolf Lake.

In adopting Miller's approach of examining written and unwritten records (in this case photographs and maps) the research aims to bring to light a narrative that has never been told. The archives and its multiple lines of inquiry are the first step of making a displaced community such as Wolf Lake visible. Through its daily activities and traditions which reveal the value of place to Métis peoples but also the trauma of being displaced from a place they had cared for, and which cared for them in return.

Chapter 4: Locating Métis Way of Life at Wolf Lake

Chapter 4 highlights the importance of Métis places for Métis people, with the intent on making visible the Wolf Lake Métis community. Using an archival methodological approach and drawing on Métis studies research, I examine the connection that developed through Wolf Lake daily life and maintenance of reciprocal relations with the land. The maintenance of this relationship through Métis diplomatic political traditions, hunting and trapping practices, kinship, and social engagements can be understood as upholding Métis tradition, and its connection to Wolf Lake. I will further highlight the history and dynamics of the Wolf Lake Métis community prior to its establishment as a Métis settlement, and also once it was established as a settlement. This chapter illuminates the significance of places and territory

whereby Métis peoplehood and nationhood sprung forth. These places emanate all aspects of our Métis way of knowing and doing. This chapter answers my research question of examining a displaced community as an aid to understanding the importance of Métis territoriality and place, rooted in Métis traditions, political, economic, and social ways of life.

For Métis people movement across territory was based on seasonality and kinship relations rooted in a layered experience with the land that informed all aspects of Métis way of life.⁹⁹ To the colonial states, habitation connotes permanent sedentary settlement. For example, in the Dominion Lands Act, settlers making a claim for homestead could only receive patent if they improved their land holding, and resided on the land permanently.¹⁰⁰ Improvements meant the erection of a specific sized home, not dwellings such as tents or small shacks, as well as erecting barns, fencing, digging a well, and other marks of permanence on the land.¹⁰¹ To the colonial state, and its enacted systems, Métis families and communities' movements were deemed nomadic, as their wintering, summering and trap lines did not fit within the Dominion's subscribed notion of permanent habitation, and ultimate goal of creating non-Aboriginal communities on the prairies. The colonial states' western epistemologies functioned, and continues to operate, to dispossess Métis peoples from their territories. Typically, colonial states erase Indigenous presence and history in order to replace with a colonial narrative.¹⁰² In the case of Wolf Lake, however, the erasure of the community was not replaced with a different narrative,

⁹⁹ See Nathalie Kermoal, *Un Passé Féminin Métis*. Québec: Éditions GID, 2006; Nicole St. Onge "Memories of Métis Women of Saint-Eustache, Manitoba – 1910-1980," in *Oral History Forum* vol 19-20 (2000); Brenda Macdougall, *One of the Family: Metis Culture in Nineteenth Century Northwestern Saskatchewan*, Vancouver University of British Columbia Press, 201.; Brenda Macdougall and Nicole St-Onge, "Rooted in Mobility: Metis Buffalo Hunting Brigades." *Manitoba History Special Edition: Red River Revisited*. vol. 71 (2013).

¹⁰⁰ *An Act respecting the Public Lands of the Dominion*, 1872. Ottawa. "Dominion Lands Act"

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² Moreton-Robinson, *The White Possessive*: 7.

but rather simply rendered invisible. Rather a silence exists around the displacement of Wolf Lake. Colonial states do not only erase to replace, it appears at times they erase in order to hide their actions and thus the histories, allowing it to be forgotten. In my subsequent chapter, I will explore the colonial powers and its systems that removed Métis people from significant places and expose the nature of these systems that not only displace and erase but subsequently destroy our way of life and relationship with the land. First, the research examines the very nature and sophistication of Métis ways of knowing by re-membering the Wolf Lake Métis community.

Studying one element of Métis way of life without considering the woven nature of these elements fails to recognize the important connection Métis communities developed with the land. In his study on the Western Apache, Keith Basso explains that "... the landscape in which the people dwell can be said to dwell in them. For the constructions Apaches impose upon their landscape have been fashioned from the same cultural materials as constructions they impose upon themselves as members of society. Both give expression to the same set of values, standards, and ideals; both are manifestations of the same distinctive charter for being-in-the-world."¹⁰³ He further adds that "Inhabitants of their landscape, the Western Apache are thus inhabited by it as well, and in the timeless depth of that abiding reciprocity, the people and their landscape are virtually as one."¹⁰⁴ Such a worldview is not unique to one Indigenous group but rather finds commonality amongst many. What Basso describes for the Apache also applies to the Métis people. The Métis common values and standards developed through daily activities

¹⁰³ Keith Basso, *Wisdom Sits in Place*: 102.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 171.

and interactions with the land.¹⁰⁵ For Métis communities inhabiting a place means that the land inhabits them, and thus the land informs our way of life. We can see how this reciprocal relationship with the land informs Métis daily life through activities and interactions with the land. Wolf Lake as a community sustained the needs of the Métis peoples, as the land sustained the community and the people. Activities such as seasonal hunting, trapping, growing gardens, raising animals, and social gatherings marked the daily lives of Métis people at Wolf Lake.¹⁰⁶ Through daily activities we see the perpetuation of a Métis way of life based on good relations with all living and non-living beings, as well as an intimate knowledge of the land.

An Important Métis place – Wolf Lake

As early as the late nineteenth century, Wolf Lake was an important place for Métis peoples. In considering the fur trade history of the area, and the abundance of fur bearing animals, such as beaver, muskrat and marten, it is likely that Métis free traders occupied the area as early as the early nineteenth century. Wolf Lake is located in the north eastern region of the Province of Alberta, north of Bonnyville, and east of Lac La Biche (see Appendix 2, p. 133). Part of the Beaver Basin region, Wolf Lake flows through Wolf River eastward to the Sand River, which connects to the Beaver River.¹⁰⁷ The Beaver River flows east to west and thus provided a “waterway halfway between the Athabasca river and the North Saskatchewan river.”¹⁰⁸ Wolf Lake is connected via waterways, and eventually by trails, to the significant Métis community of

¹⁰⁵ For further discussions on this point see Nathalie Kermoal, “Métis Women’s Environmental Knowledge and the Recognition of Métis Rights,” in *Living on the Land: Indigenous Women’s Understanding of Place*, Edited by Nathalie Kermoal and Isabel Altamirano-Jiménez. Edmonton: Athabasca Press, 2016.

¹⁰⁶ See James Brady “Wolf Lake Settlement Reports – 1941 to 1943,” Glenbow Archives, Calgary: James Brady Fonds, M-125-376.

¹⁰⁷ P. Mitchelle and Ellie Prepas, *Atlas of Alberta Lakes*, (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1990): 330. Also see Appendix 2, p. 133.

¹⁰⁸ Lawrence Barkwell, “Green Lake, Lac Vert, Saskatchewan,” Louis Riel Institute. 2013. Accessed from Gabriel Dumont Institute Virtual Museum <http://www.metismuseum.ca/resource.php/14326>.

Lac La Biche and Cold Lake. It is further connected via the Beaver River, which flows from present day northern Saskatchewan, to Île-à-la-Crosse and Green Lake. Wolf Lake was thus linked to important fur trade outposts. Île-à-la-Crosse was an “epicentre” in the northwest region of Saskatchewan, since it sat at the intersection of important waterways connecting Hudson’s Bay to the western territories through the Churchill, Beaver, and Canoe river systems.¹⁰⁹ Trade goods were “freighted by canoe to Isle-à-la-Crosse [sic] and the northern districts of English River, Lesser Slave Lake and the Peace and Athabasca Rivers.”¹¹⁰ David Thompson, fur trader, explorer and geographer, is considered the first recorded European explorer using the Beaver River to reach Red Deers Lake (Lac La Biche) in 1798.¹¹¹ That same year Thompson wintered at Lac La Biche and established a fur trading post known as Red Deer Lake House. Prior to Thompson’s establishment of a post at Lac La Biche, trading posts had begun to emerge in the Beaver River Basin as early as 1774. Cold Lake House trading post located on the Clearwater River, was established by the St. Lawrence Traders and operated from 1774-1789.¹¹² Similarly the Fort Lac-D’Original also operated by the St. Lawrence Traders and for roughly the same period was just south of Lac La Biche. In 1806, the Hudson’s Bay Company established a smaller post known as Moose Lake in 1806 next to the old Fort Lac d’Original. Trading posts were established in strategic positions on main transport lines, and functioned as locations for

¹⁰⁹ Liam J. Haggarty, “Métis Economics: Sharing and Exchange in Northwest Saskatchewan,” in *Contours of a People: Metis Family, Mobility, and Métis in Canada: History, Identity, Law & Politics*, ed. by Nicole St-Onge, Carolyn Prodruchny, and Brenda Macdougall, (NormanChristopher Adams, Gregg Dahl and Ian Peach, (Edmonton: University of OklahomaAlberta Press, 2012): 2013): 211.

¹¹⁰ Lawrence Barkwell, “Green Lake, Lac Vert, Saskatchewan.”

¹¹¹ John Nicks, “THOMPSON, DAVID (1770-1857),” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biographies*, “David Thompson,” *Biography*, vol. 8, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003.
http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/thompson_david_1770_1857_8E.html.

¹¹² Cole Harris and Geoffrey J Matthews. *Historical Atlas of Canada*, Vol.1. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987): Plate 62

trade, but also as a depots and administrative centre.¹¹³ Smaller fur out posts were located throughout the area, which provided an outlet for furs to be traded and transportation to the larger fur trade posts. According to R.C. Chipeniuk's *Lakes of the Lac La Biche District*, a cabin situated at the “. . . first point south of the outlet mouth of the Wolf River was a trading post operated by a Metis with the surname “Hunter”, the promontory was called “Hunter’s Point” for that reasons.”¹¹⁴ Métis free traders trapped and traded throughout the larger Beaver River basin area, and it not surprising that a small trading outpost existed at Wolf Lake. Wolf Lake was further connected to the many Métis families wintering and trapping, and eventually residing more permanently at lakes throughout the area. In *Lakes of the Lac La Biche District*, Chipeniuk further notes that: “there are many old wagon tracks in the Wolf Lake district. . . Another important route, accredited to the Wolf Lake Metis, stretched all the way from Lac La Biche to Cold Lake.”¹¹⁵ Family names recorded on the 1940 Wolf Lake membership list includes the Cardinal and Desjarlais families.¹¹⁶ These two families were active in the region as the late eighteenth century. Historian Heather Devine traced the genealogy of the Desjarlais family throughout the fur trade, and their emergence as free traders in the Athabasca and Lesser Slave Lake regions. Herself descendent of the Desjarlais, Devine notes that the Desjarlais freeman band emerged in Rupertsland as early as 1783, with many becoming free traders as early as 1805.¹¹⁷ The Desjarlais families, the two key brothers Old Antoine Desjarlais and his brother Old Joseph Desjarlais who were followed by their descendants, operated primarily in the Athabasca

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ R.C. Chipeniuk, *Lakes of the Lac La Biche District*, (Calgary: D.W. Friesen and Sons, 1975): 152.

¹¹⁵ Chipeniuk, *Lakes of the Lac La Biche District*: 151.

¹¹⁶ “Wolf Lake Membership Lists,” Glenbow Archives, Calgary: James Brady fonds, accession M-125-37a. and James Brady “Wolf Lake Settlement Reports – 1941 to 1943,” Glenbow Archives, Calgary: James Brady Fonds, M-125-376.

¹¹⁷ Heather Devine, “Les Desjarlais: The Development and Dispersion of a Proto-Métis Hunting Band, 1758-1870,” in *From Rupert's Land to Canada*, ed. Theodore Binnema, Gerhard Ens, and R.C. Macleod, (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2001): 133.

hinterland, typically wintering. By 1827, after the new policies implemented by Governor George Simpson with the merger of the HBC and NW trading company in 1821, many Desjarlais' had lost the opportunities of bettering themselves in the Lesser Slave Lake area, and according to Devine "over the next few years the names of Desjarlais family members disappear from the Lesser Slave Lake post records... Where the various branches of the Desjarlais family went is unclear. Some Desjarlais who had intermarried with other freemen families, such as the Cardinal family, remained on the shores of Lesser Slave Lake and Lac La Biche, where their descendants can be found today."¹¹⁸ Although it is unclear the exact lineal genealogical descent of the Wolf Lake Desjarlais and Cardinal families, it appears that some Wolf Lake families are likely the descendants of those early free traders families. Smaller communities like Wolf Lake were not isolated nor disconnected from the larger Métis network. Prior to Wolf Lake's allocation as a Métis settlement in 1936, the area was an important site for Métis free traders and eventually their families. Changes in fur trade company policy in the mid-eighteenth century, and eventually the decline of the fur trade altogether in the latter part of the century would necessitate more permanent year round residency at wintering sites like Wolf Lake.

Métis Mobility & Wintering

Métis movement across vast territories was part of their dynamic economic systems, supported by kinship networks, and rooted in honouring their relationship with the land. In by doing so the Métis were upholding their traditions. According to historian Nathalie Kermaoal, "The ontological relationship that Métis people have with the land is still very much at the centre

¹¹⁸ Heather Devine, *The People Who Own Themselves: Aboriginal Ethnogenesis in a Canadian Family, 1660-1990*, (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2013): 148.

of their political and collective aspirations.”¹¹⁹ As Métis partook in the fur trade opportunities, like those of the Desjarlais in the Lesser Slave Lake and Lac La Biche region, sites developed with different purposes based on varying seasons and situations. Some sites were for wintering whether on the plains or in trapping areas, seasonal buffalo hunts, and specific locations to harvest hay for livestock. These movements were not aimless, rather they were strategic. Mobility was based on seasonal periods of occupation of specific sites. These sites formed part of their collective traditions tied to social, economic, and cultural aspects of Métis peoplehood. Kinship relations made it possible for Métis people to move across such a vast geography. Nicole St-Onge and Brenda Macdougall’s study of Métis buffalo brigades’ movement on the plains in the nineteenth century reveals the continuous seasonal movement of Métis families: “[t]hese were a people who lived in family-based economic units and spent their lives in a continuous cycle of movement.”¹²⁰ According to Kermoal such movement was essential to Métis way of life: “Historically, the Métis way of life depended on the existence of open spaces – territory across which they could travel freely, hunting, fishing, and gathering plants.”¹²¹ For the Métis, mobility across the expanse of territory was possible due to their highly sophisticated kinship networks. These kinship relationships functioned as nodes across the territory, allowing the Métis to trap, hunt, trade and winter. Nicole St-Onge and Carolyn Prodruchny add that the “smallest hunting camps and outposts were connected to global systems of trade and alliance over vast geography expanses through extended webs of kin as well as economic, social, and cultural activities that bound people together.”¹²² In addition, Macdougall, St-Onge, and Prodruchny’s extensive studies on Métis kinship have identified how the “Metis were woven

¹¹⁹ Kermoal, “Métis Women’s Environmental Knowledge and the Recognition of Métis Rights”: 117.

¹²⁰ St. Onge and Macdougall, “Rooted in Mobility: Metis Buffalo Hunting Brigades”: 25-26.

¹²¹ Nathalie Kermoal, “Métis Women’s Environmental Knowledge and the Recognition of Métis Rights”: 117.

¹²² St-Onge and Prodruchny, “Scuttling Along A Spider’s Web”: 67.

together by a mobility that bridged many human and physical geographies and by their kinship ties that bound the far-flung and dispersed human elements into a coherent functioning whole.”¹²³ Métis mobility was possible because of the extended web of kin, which Brenda Macdougall calls kinscapes – that is “a network of family relationships knit together in a certain place and time.”¹²⁴

Although Métis people were mobile they nonetheless had important connections to specific locations, which formed part of their “cycle of movement”. The *hivervants* spent the winter among other families in near proximity to the buffalo herds. These wintering sites were often near the edge of river banks or lakes such as the Qu’Appelle River, Cypress Hills and Buffalo Lake and could consist of up to two hundred families.¹²⁵ However, wintering sites also developed in the northern regions, such as the Athabasca district. The Athabasca district is typically defined as encompassing Lac La Biche, Peace River, Athabasca Lake and the Great Slave Lake area.¹²⁶ St. Onge’s study of the Athabasca Métis reveals how free trader Métis families were wintering in the northwest in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. St-Onge, in studying the North West trading company’s contract records discovered that: “These individuals were working in the Athabasca district before 1810 and remained in the area for an extended period. . . . This well circumscribed sample allows for the study of an early fur-trade

¹²³ Brenda Macdougall, Carolyn Podruchny, and Nicole St.-Onge, “Introduction: Cultural Mobility and the Contours of Difference,” in *Contours of a Peoples: Metis Family, Mobility, and History*, ed. by Nicole St-Onge, Carolyn Podruchny and Brenda Macdougall. (Norman: University of Oklahoma, 2012): 14.

¹²⁴ Sharon Oosthoek, “What does it mean to be Métis” University of Ottawa researcher sharpens our understanding of the term, in *Research Matters* (June 1, 2017), <http://yourontarioresearch.ca/2017/06/what-it-means-to-be-metis/>

¹²⁵ Kermoal, *Un Passé Métis au Féminin* : 74-75. See also John Foster. “Wintering, the Outsider Adult Male and the Ethnogenesis of the Western Plains Métis.” In *From Rupert’s Land to Canada*, eds. John Elgin Foster, R. C. Macleod, Theodore Binnema, 179-192. Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2001.

¹²⁶ Nicole St-Onge, “Early forefathers to the Athabasca Métis,” in *The Long Journey of a Forgotten people : Métis Identities & Family Histories*, ed. Ute Lischke and David T. McNab, (Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 2007): 113.

employees who chose to reside in the area, often permanently, and who formed the nuclei of the Athabaskan Métis population.”¹²⁷ These locations where Métis free traders chose to stay were not simply a site to winter for economic activities, but were places where their layered experience with the land developed and existed.

Wintering on the trap line was a common practice of Métis in Northern Alberta, and formed part of the seasonal movement of Métis families and communities. According to the Fort McMurray Traditional Land Study, produced in 2012, the Métis trappers’ cabins on the family trapline were the nodes of an extended survival network across the land.¹²⁸ Trapping was done in the winter months, from November to March, after having spent the summer and fall gathering, hunting and preparing food for the winter. Animals such as muskrats, fox, coyote, rabbits, squirrels and lynx were trapped for both food, fur for clothing as well as for trade and sale.¹²⁹ According to a Métis elder from the Lac La Biche region: “Well, the springtime, when trapping’s over, we’d go home to Lac La Biche. We’d stay the whole summer and then when fall comes, again grandpa would go back to the trapline.”¹³⁰ Although trapline regulations introduced in the 1930s and 1940s will significantly impact Métis trappers, which I will discuss in detail in chapter five, trapping areas increasingly became more permanent places of residence for Métis families.

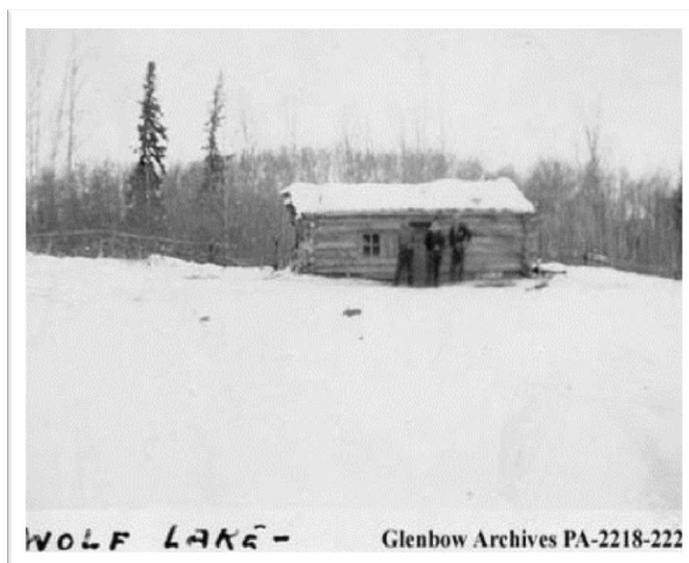
¹²⁷ Ibid., 110. See also: Heather Devine, *The People Who Own Themselves: Aboriginal Ethnogenesis in a Canadian Family, 1660-1990*. Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2013.

¹²⁸ *Mark of the Métis: Traditional Knowledge and Stories of the Métis Peoples of Northeastern Alberta*. Fort McMurray, Alta.: Métis Nation of Alberta Association, Fort McMurray Local Council 1935, 2012: 24.

¹²⁹ Fort McMurray Local Council, *Mark of the Métis*: 82

¹³⁰ Ibid., 53.

Wolf Lake was originally a wintering site, where entire families and communities gathered for the winter. Louis Garneau, James Brady's uncle, formerly resided on the St. Paul des Métis colony, wintered at Wolf Lake. A photograph from the Glenbow Archives shows a cabin in winter with three men standing in front, the annotation on the back of the photographs reads: "Louis Garneau's cabin on Wolf Lake. Where I wintered 1930-31."¹³¹ In Brady's report, he notes families such as the Cardinals and Desjarlais who were trapping in winter at Wolf Lake prior to the 1890s. Brady also noted that Lawrence Daniels made application to the Wolf Lake settlement in 1939, however he had been trapping in the area during the previous winter, but would leave in the fall, likely to undertake hunting or work elsewhere. For Daniels, Wolf Lake was a winter trapping location, and Daniels' family saw the Wolf Lake area as a wintering location. In his report, Brady remarks on the Daniels' use of the area: "It is reported his parents had left St. Paul



with the purpose of wintering with him with the alleged purpose of hunting and trapping in the Area."¹³² Other families often wintered at Wolf Lake and moved to other areas for the spring and summer. The Cardinal families were known to "leave the Area in the spring remain away all summer but return to winter availing themselves of hunting, trapping, and fishing."¹³³ The

¹³¹ Photograph Louis Garneau cabin at Wolf Lake, Glenbow Archives Photograph, PA-2218-222.

¹³² Brady Report, "Wolf Lake Settlement Reports – 1941 to 1943": 10.

¹³³ Ibid., 22.

overall area surrounding Wolf Lake was utilized as a wintering site. For example, Mosquito Lake where Brady noted Métis families were wintering and eventually residing more permanently, and was within the Wolf Lake region (see Appendix 11 map of lakes in area, p. 144).¹³⁴ A criminal case files from December 1919, indicates that Vital Jackknife, who had conflict with Cardinal over theft of fishing nets, resided at Mosquito Lake for “part of the summer and all winter”.¹³⁵

The decline of the fur trade and increased settlement in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, accompanied by discrimination, reduced Métis peoples’ mobility. Smaller nodes such as wintering sites developed more as a year round Métis communities based on their longstanding significance as Métis places in a larger web of movement. Wolf Lake was one such smaller node in a larger interconnected Métis territory that developed increasingly as a year round community. As the Canadian and Provincial governments continued to survey parts of the western provinces for settlement, surveyors began exploring the Wolf Lake region in 1911. Federal government surveyors sent to survey the lands in and around Wolf Lake documented information revealing the area was used in winter. In September 1916, surveyor Fred Seibert documents a sleigh road through the area (See Appendix 3, p. 134).¹³⁶ In addition to the sleigh road, Seibert reports several trails and roads through the area as well as a winter road cutting through the region (See Appendix 4, p. 135). These reports indicate habitation at Wolf Lake. In his 1916 report, surveyor Fred Seibert notes that a large section is located in “what is called by

¹³⁴ Ibid., 32. See also Mémoire of Father E. Lacombe, who visited the Wolf Lake area and noted 10 Métis families living at Mosquito Lake: Memoire entry of Fr. E. Lacombe, March 6, 1942. Provincial Archives of Alberta, Oblates Archives PR1971.0220, file 8194.

¹³⁵ Information and Complaint Vital Jack Knife, in the Province of Alberta, sworn December 20, 1919. Provincial Archives of Alberta 72.26 file 2587c.

¹³⁶ Fred V. Seibert, “Survey Report,” September 1916. Provincial Archives of Alberta, accession 83.376, file no 4777a.

the natives the Wolf Mountains...”¹³⁷ Seibert further noted in his September 1916 report that residents along the shore of Wolf Lake were successfully growing radishes with minimal work to the soil but by simply “spading the fresh sod and planting the seed.”¹³⁸ The surveyor reports not only reveal the area was used in winter, and thus an important wintering site, but by the time of the survey in 1911 and 1916 the area was also part of other seasonal activities, such as growing gardens in the spring and summer, and thus more permanent habitation.

The surveyor reports of 1911 and 1916 indicate that the Wolf Lake area was dotted with a variety of pre-existing trails to and from the lake. The web of trails through the Wolf Lake area further solidify the area as an important place for Métis peoples’ seasonal activities, and its connection to other Métis communities in the region. In 1911, surveyor W.H. Young mapped the existing trails to, from and within the Wolf Lake area. He notes several “old pack trails” crisscrossing from the lake and the streams of the area, and traversing several townships.¹³⁹ He states: “this township has a wagon trail which goes through section 4, 10, 14, 23, 24, 25, and 36, and comes from the settled country to the south. It is not a very good trail at present but can be made good.”¹⁴⁰ Seibert remarked on a pack trail which “connects this trail with the trail along Sand River and could be made a good wagon trail.”¹⁴¹ The Sand River connected to the Beaver River waterways and important trading networks. In September 1916, elaborating on his previous August report, Seibert notes that “A wagon trail through sections 8, 5 and 6 connects Wolf Lake in this township to the trail along Sand River which connects with St. Paul des

¹³⁷ Fred V. Seibert, “Survey Report,” August 1916. Provincial Archives of Alberta, accession 83.376, file no. 4778a.

¹³⁸ Seibert, “Survey Report,” September 1916 report.

¹³⁹ W.H. Young, “Survey Report,” September 1911. Provincial Archives of Alberta, accession 83.376, file no. 3641a

¹⁴⁰ Seibert, “Survey Report,” August 1916.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

Métis.”¹⁴² In another report of the area, Seibert re-iterates the connection of Wolf Lake to St. Paul des Métis but also to other communities and lakes: “this township can be reached by a trail from Pinehurst Lake which is connected by trail to both Lac La Biche and St. Paul des Métis. Another Trail reached the north end of this township from Mosquito Lake which is also connected with St. Paul des Métis by a wagon trail via the Sand River.”¹⁴³ As noted previously, Mosquito Lake sat within the Wolf Lake area and was also a site where Métis families wintered. Wolf Lake was linked to other Métis communities throughout the larger Beaver River basin area. As noted above, it was connected to Lac La Biche and Cold Lake through waterways and trails. According to R.C. Chipeniuk in *Lakes of the Lac La Biche District*:

There are many old wagon tracks in the Wolf Lake district. One track used to lead from “Two Lakes” vicinity to the SW Bay of Wolf Lake . . . Another important route, accredited to the Wolf Lake Metis, stretched all the way from Lac La Biche to Cold Lake; part of it is shown as running along the lower Wolf River . . . but it crossed the Sand River at a ford north of the mouth of the Wolf and continued westward to Spencer, then joined the Touchwood winter road. The Metis looped this trail pretty much right around Wolf Lake, but it was in best condition along the N. shore.¹⁴⁴

The extensive trail system, and the variety of trails, indicate the area was well known and used. Wagon trails would have been ideal for spring, summer and fall access in and to/from the area. Sleigh and Winter roads ideal for winter access. These surveyor reports’ of well-established trails for all season use, individuals growing gardens, and local land mark names reveal permanent occupation patterns.

Wolf Lake was a point of return and stability for mobile Métis families, where a community emerged from the connection to the area as a wintering site, providing the fur and

¹⁴² Seibert, “Survey Report”, September 1916.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Chipeniuk, *Lakes of the Lac La Biche District*: 151.

food resources. Although Métis mobility was reduced due to increased settlement in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, these wintering sites remained an essential part of Métis traditions, eventually developing in more permanent year round residency. These networks of trails not only support oral testimony that a Métis community existed at Wolf Lake in the early twentieth century, but that it appears to have been there for some time. The patterns of trails crossing streams connected the residents of the area to important places such as trap lines, fishing spots, and plant gathering. Important kinship networks, bound to significant places, continued to inform relationality and ways of doing at Wolf Lake.

A Node in a Large Web

In addition to documenting the change from wintering to increasingly permanent occupation of the Wolf Lake area, the surveyor's report documents the highly developed trail system connecting Wolf Lake to other Métis communities, like that of St. Paul des Métis. Seibert notes that the trail connecting to St. Paul des Métis "is a good trail and is used a great deal by hunters and trappers at all seasons of the year."¹⁴⁵ In examining the surveyor maps from 1911 and 1916, it is evident that the community of St. Paul des Métis along with Lac La Biche were directly connected to Wolf Lake by way of direct trails linking them.¹⁴⁶

These well-established trails also extended to the community of St. Paul des Métis. Métis families left St. Paul des Métis after its closure.¹⁴⁷ Émeric Drouin's history of the St. Paul des Métis colony, reveals how Father Thérien, supervisor of the Saint Paul des Métis colony, recalls

¹⁴⁵ Seibert, "Survey Report," September 1916.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

Métis people from St. Paul journeying to Wolf Lake for its excellent whitefish: “Towards the end of October, Fr. Thérien organized a fishing expedition so that everyone could obtain fish for the winter. The caravan sets out for the Lac du Loup, known for its white fish and located some forty miles north”¹⁴⁸ Unsurprisingly, families from St. Paul des Métis eventually settled more permanently at Wolf Lake once St. Paul was disbanded.¹⁴⁹ According to a map of the former St. Paul des Métis colony, families that had land allotments on the colony such as Louis Garneau, Timothy Dumont, Louis Larivière, Gauthiers and A. Collins all resettled and appear on the Wolf Lake membership list (see Appendix 5, p. 136).¹⁵⁰ Significantly, these families from St. Paul des Métis re-settled at Wolf Lake near to one another (see Appendix 6, p. 137). The connection between Wolf Lake and St. Paul des Métis highlights how these important social and economic gathering places provide sites of familiarity during increased marginalization in the twentieth century.

Kinship networks from St. Paul to Wolf Lake were common. Moise Piché had been in the Wolf Lake area prior to its creation as a settlement, and was originally from the St. Paul des Métis colony.¹⁵¹ In addition, in January 1942 James Brady reported running into Delphis Beaugard of St. Paul who was “enroute to Wolf Lake for a load of fish.”¹⁵² As mentioned

¹⁴⁸ Émeric Drouin, *Joyau dans la Plaine, Saint-Paul, Alberta : Colonie Metisse 1896-1909, Paroisse Blanche 1909-1951*, (Quebec: Editions Ferland, 1968): 63. “Vers la fin d’octobre, le P. Thérien organise une expédition de pêche afin que tous se procurent du poisson pour l’hiver. La caravane se met en route vers le lac du Loup, réputé pour son poisson blanc et situé à une quarantaine de milles au nord.” Translation by Nathalie Kermaal

¹⁴⁹ For a history of Saint Paul des Métis see Nathalie Kermaal, “From Saint Paul des Métis to Saint Paul: A Patch of Franco-Albertan History,” in *Encyclopedia of French Cultural Heritage in North America*. See also Eméric Drouin, *Histoire de Saint Paul: 1909-1959*, (St. Paul: St. Paul Journal: 1960); James P. Brady, “The Saint Paul Halfbreed Reserve,” Gabriel Dumont Institute, 2004. Transcribed by David Morin. GDI Virtual Museum of Métis History and Culture.

¹⁵⁰ Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate. “Cartographie St. Paul des Métis, Oblate records,” Provincial Archives of Alberta, Oblates Fonds, accession PR1973.0399/ 73.

¹⁵¹ Brady report, “Wolf Lake Settlement Reports – 1941-1943”: 4.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 18.

above, waterways connect Wolf Lake to regions like Lac La Biche and Cold Lake. In addition, Mary Caroline Deschambeau was eight years old when her family moved from Fort McMurray area to Lac La Biche. She remembers many of the Métis families living along the shores of Lac La Biche, such as the Desjarlais, Pepins and Cardinals. Mary recalls while living at Lac La Biche :

. . .her father and his driver would carry supplies out to the various groups by dogteam and on the return bring back the furs. Each group or clan had a headman, not elected but chosen by consensus, who distributed the goods and handled the bargaining over the furs. Separate runs were made out to Wolf Lake, “Mosquito”, Winefred, and other localities about once a month in rotation.¹⁵³

¹⁵³ Lac La Biche Heritage Society. *Lac La Biche: Yesterday and Today*, (Lac La Biche: Lac La Biche Heritage Society, 1975): 50.

This excerpt by Mary indicates the connectivity of the larger region, while simultaneously revealing Métis traditions of choosing a group headman based on consensus.¹⁵⁴ As noted previously, surveyor Fred Seibert had also noted the connection of Wolf Lake to Mosquito Lake. These kinship networks extended throughout the Beaver River basin region. For example, Paul Cardinal who resided to the North of Wolf Lake, and claimed to have resided at Wolf Lake since 1892, was married to Eliza Piche a member of the Heart Lake Indian band.¹⁵⁵ Although it is unknown of the relations, another individual known as Moise Piche (formerly of St. Paul des Métis) established himself at Wolf Lake.¹⁵⁶ Many Wolf Lake Métis families had kinship ties with other Métis communities in the region, specifically with other settlements. For example, Peter Desjarlais made application to enter Wolf Lake in 1942 from his previous residence of Elizabeth settlement, since Desjarlais was married to a Wolf Lake Metis.¹⁵⁷ Elzear Martel moved into the Wolf Lake area in January 1942. Martel's family was from Beacon Hill, Saskatchewan, a community directly 85 kilometers east



from Wolf Lake.¹⁵⁸ The trails the surveyors recorded indicate seasonal continuous presence in the area, in the winter, and in spring and summer, but they further uncover the importance of

¹⁵⁴ See Adam Gaudry, "Kaa-tipeyimishoyaahk - 'We are those who own ourselves': A Political History of Métis Self-Determination in the North-West, 1830-1870," Phd Dissertation, (Victoria: University of Victoria, 2014).

¹⁵⁵ Brady Report, "Wolf Lake Settlement Reports – 1941-1943": 5.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 5, and 15.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 15.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 13.

kinship, diplomatic traditions based on consensus, and connection to other Métis communities in the area.

Photographs include Mr. and Mrs. Louis Garneau at Wolf Lake in front of what appears to be their home, and another with Mrs. Louis Garneau and Mrs. Louis Larivière at Wolf Lake.¹⁵⁹ According to James Brady, Louis Larivière had a plot on the existing St. Paul des Métis halfbreed reserve.¹⁶⁰ Louis' name appears on the Wolf Lake settlement list of residents in 1940, along with two other Larivière', Oscar and Walter. James Brady's family were also members of the St. Paul des Métis colony, whereas his father established in 1905, and where



his grandfather Garneau settled in 1901.¹⁶¹ However by the 1930s Louis Garneau and Louis Larivière had established themselves in the Wolf Lake area prior to its creation as a settlement. The photographs depict similar home construction of Métis families in the twentieth century, small log cabins. The women are wearing aprons evidence of the daily life activities of preparing and storing food for the family, caring for children and family members. The other images depict the families in their finer clothing perhaps visiting. Mrs. Garneau and Mrs Larivière are photographed together, smiling. Their hair is tied back in the traditional Métis “chicoine” or hair bun. The photographs portray the daily relations and activities at Wolf Lake, of visiting and relating with friends.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁹ Photograph Mr and Mrs Louis Garneau at Wolf Lake, Glenbow Archives, PA-2218-190 and PA-2218-189.

¹⁶⁰ James Brady, “Untitled Document – Brady Family History,” transcribed by David Morin, GDI Métis Virtual Museum, <http://www.metismuseum.ca/media/document.php/03847.J.P.Brady.Untitled.pdf>

¹⁶¹ Brady, “Untitled Document – Brady Family History.”

¹⁶² For further photographs of Wolf Lake see Appendix 12, p. 145 (Glenbow Archival Photographs PA-2218-191, PA-2218-188 and PA-2218-187).

Annual Cycle

Métis families at Wolf Lake lived according to a Métis way of knowing and understanding of the world. This way of knowing informed all aspects of Métis life, from kinship, visiting, and seasonal activities such as hunting, trapping, and harvesting. According to Métis Elder Elmer Ghostkeeper, all these activities formed part of the Métis annual cycle, which required understanding the natural signs that signalled when to begin and end a seasonal round of activities, such as planting, and gathering and harvesting animals.¹⁶³ Moreover, understanding of the seasonal cycles was spiritual as they were based on local traditions of preparing and sharing gifts obtained from the land.¹⁶⁴ The Métis seasonal cycle of activities fostered and strengthened relationship with the land, as it required an intimate and respectful understanding of the land.

The Wolf Lake area consisted of a variety of streams that drained into smaller lakes. The entire area was dotted by small lakes and streams, ideal for hunting and fishing. Wolf Lake is home to twelve species of fish, such as northern pike, walleye, and whitefish, and the surrounding area provides a habitat for a variety of wildlife.¹⁶⁵ According to Surveyor Seibert, who was in Wolf Lake in 1916, Wolf Lake “has clearwater and many whitefish, pickerel and jack fish.”¹⁶⁶ The resources of the area not only sustained the Métis community at Wolf Lake, but also made it an ideal location for seasonal gathering. As such, it was a key location for economic and social activities for the larger area. The geographic area surrounding Wolf Lake with its many smaller lakes provided important camping places for Métis families, many of which camped seasonally for fishing, hunting and trapping (see Appendix 11: Lakes connected

¹⁶³ Ghostkeeper, *Spirit Gifting*: 13.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 53.

¹⁶⁵ Mitchell and Prepas, *Atlas of Alberta Lakes*: 333.

¹⁶⁶ Seibert, “Survey Report,” August 1916.

to Wolf Lake, p. 144). One such lake near Wolf Lake mentioned previously, was Mosquito Lake where Métis families hunted, trapped and eventually resided. Today the lake no longer is known as Mosquito Lake, but was renamed as Spencer Lake, after James Spencer HBC post manager at Lac La Biche from 1900 to 1919.¹⁶⁷ Spencer travelled throughout the area to other major lakes, carrying supplies to the Métis trappers and picking up furs.¹⁶⁸ According to an interview with Maggie Desjarlais: “We always camped where we could get game and fish. We had camps at Mosquito Lake and, when the government made our hunting grounds into a bombing range, we were forced to move out and look for a new area to hunt in.”¹⁶⁹ The bulk of Mosquito Lake (now known as Spencer Lake) sits within the boundary of the Primrose Air Weapons Range.¹⁷⁰ Brady also remarked on Métis families at Mosquito Lake, whereas he notes that Métis were having difficulty with white trappers who had registered all the best trapping lines.¹⁷¹ Another lake in the area was Worm Lake (today known as Seibert Lake, renamed after surveyor Fred Seibert - see Appendix 11 p. 144) where Maggie recalls her parents established more or less a permanent home. Wolf Lake was also an ideal area for fur-bearing animals such as beaver, mink, muskrat, otter, coyote, weasel, fox, lynx, squirrels and wolves due to the interspersion of wetlands and upland areas in the watershed.¹⁷² Situated in the core area for beaver, muskrat and marten, the Wolf Lake area supplied these furs to the growing trading system that was established in the eighteenth century.¹⁷³ In addition the area east of the lake was a key wintering area for moose,

¹⁶⁷ Chipeniuk, *Lakes of the Lac La Biche District*: 146.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 146-147.

¹⁶⁹ Lac La Biche Heritage Society, *Lac La Biche: Yesterday and Today*: 88.

¹⁷⁰ Chipeniuk, *Lakes of the Lac La Biche District*: 147.

¹⁷¹ Brady report, “Wolf Lake Settlements Reports – 1941-1943”: 32.

¹⁷² Mitchell and Prepas, *Atlas of Alberta Lakes*: 333.

¹⁷³ Arthur J. Ray, *Canada's Native People: I have lived here since the World began*, (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2011): 72-73.

and other wildlife such as white-tailed deer, woodland caribou and elk.¹⁷⁴ In 1916, surveyor Seibert noted that the “moose and deer are plentiful, fox, lynx, coyotes and other fur bearing animals are fairly plentiful, but will no doubt increase when the rabbits become plentiful again.”¹⁷⁵ In the 1940s, Métis families continued to use the Wolf Lake region as an important node in a larger network of seasonal movement. Many continued to camp in the area, such as Maggie Desjarlais’ family, and George Moore who set up camp near the Sand river.¹⁷⁶

The Wolf Lake area had a carrying capacity for trapping and hunting. Families such as Charlie Cardinal, Frank Cardinal, Paul Cardinal, Isadore Desjarlais and George Desjarlais were residents of the Wolf Lake region prior to the 1890s and who were proficient in their trapping activities.¹⁷⁷ In the 1940s, once the Wolf Lake settlement was established, families continued to trap in the area. Joe Boucher of Wolf Lake had “good results trapping skunks” in February 1942.¹⁷⁸ Brady in his role as supervisor at Wolf Lake noted that rabbit pelts were the major source of income for many local Métis families.¹⁷⁹ In 1942, Wolf Lake resident Charles Cardinal reported his trapping log from the winter as: 30 weasels, 93 muskrats, 4000 rabbits, 1 silver fox, 300 squirrels, 2 cross fox, 16 red fox, 4 coyotes and 1 timber wolf.¹⁸⁰ In addition foxes were also reported as plentiful in the area.¹⁸¹ Income was generated by the sale of the small game furs, which also provided a source of food. Charles Cardinal would have sold the pelts, but much of it would also have sustained the family. Métis families’ diets consisted of large game such as deer

¹⁷⁴ Mitchell and Prepas, *Atlas of Alberta Lakes*: 333.

¹⁷⁵ Seibert, “Survey Report,” August 1916.

¹⁷⁶ Brady report, “Wolf Lake Settlement Reports – 1941-1943”: 32.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 25.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 2

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 59.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 2

and moose, but also with small game such as squirrels and rabbits, as well as fowl such as ducks, prairie chickens, and partridge.¹⁸² Although the trapping log recorded by Brady represents the Métis male activities, Métis women were also known to trap, and hunt. Métis oral interviews reveal very similar experiences of eating small game that often women and/or children were tasked with provisioning for the family's meal. Bob Desjarlais of Green Lake, Saskatchewan explains in an interview: "we always had lots of deer meat and lots of rabbit."¹⁸³ Rabbit and squirrel were the key source of Métis diet. In an interview with Métis Billie Robinson he recalls: "I remember we were, we used to kill gophers and roast them... or squirrels."¹⁸⁴ Just like many Métis families throughout the west in the twentieth century, Wolf Lake Métis families continued to trap, and the area continued to support their sustenance.

In addition to trapping, many families utilized the fish resources of the area, while others in the larger region often travelled and camped at Wolf Lake to fish as part of their annual cycles. In May 1942, Brady notes that the fish were running in the creeks, and there was a "mass movement of pickerel in Wolf River."¹⁸⁵ According to Frank Tough, fishing was a reliable source of food for Aboriginal communities: "Fisheries were a source of great affluence for Indians, and this resource remained as a common property – even with the advent of the fur trade. The regularity of fish runs, the fact that various species of fish spawned during different season, and the relative ease with which fish were harvested during a spawning season made

¹⁸² Kermoal, *Un passé Métis au Féminin*, 229.

¹⁸³ Bob Desjarlais, Interviewed by Cheryl Troupe and Calvin Racette (Gabriel Dumont Institute: May 15, 2002): 25

¹⁸⁴ Norma Welsh, Billie Robinson, and Pauline Anderson, Interviewed by Cheryl Troupe (Gabriel Dumont Institute, 2004): 22.

¹⁸⁵ Brady report, "Wolf Lake Settlements Reports – 1941-1943": 34.

fisheries one of the most reliable Native food sources.”¹⁸⁶ Fishing whether in winter or throughout the spring and summer was an essential and valuable food resource for many Métis families. Maggie Desjarlais’ interview further evidences the importance of fish to Métis families as she recalls camping wherever the fish and game were available. Furthermore, Father Thérien comments on the journey undertaken by St. Paul des Métis families to Wolf Lake for the coveted whitefish.¹⁸⁷ These occurrences reveal Métis people of Wolf Lake were undertaking seasonal activities such as fishing, and that fish was a valuable source of their diet. Fish provided a variation in diet which otherwise consisted primarily of game, but it also served an important purpose for Métis Catholics. According to catholic teaching one was not to eat red meat during Lent and on Fridays.¹⁸⁸ In most aspects of Métis life, elements of spirituality were embedded with daily activities. For example, fish was a reliable source to Métis diet, but also served as religious devotion. Not only was fish an important part of Métis diet, it also maintained their winter mode of transportation via dog team. Fish was the primary source of food used to feed sled dogs and fuelled the key mode of transportation for trappers and hunters.¹⁸⁹ Mail was delivered to the Wolf Lake area via dog team, and Brady also indicates using dog team to travel through the Wolf Lake area. On January 26th, 1942, Brady wrote in his daily report notes that he “Returned to the Lower End with George Desjarlais by dog team via the West Road.”¹⁹⁰ In February, Brady further noted seeing Moise Piche and Mrs Ward returning from Bonnyville by dog team.¹⁹¹ Seeing as dog team was a primary method of transportation in the Wolf Lake area

¹⁸⁶ Frank Tough, *As their natural resources fail: native peoples and the economic history of Northern Manitoba, 1870-1930*, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1996): 174.

¹⁸⁷ Drouin, *Joyau dans la Plaine, Saint-Paul, Alberta* : 63

¹⁸⁸ Kermoal, *Un passé Métis au Féminin*, 233.

¹⁸⁹ Fort McMurray Metis Local, *Mark of the Métis*, 58-60, 134, and 137

¹⁹⁰ Brady report, “Wolf Lake Settlements Reports – 1941-1943”: 21.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 27.

during the winter months, fish would have been essential to feeding the dogs, and thus ensuring viable modes of transportation.¹⁹²

In 1919 local Métis residents at Wolf Lake undertook net fishing in the areas plentiful lakes, streams and creeks. These activities resulted in a conflict and a legal action when Vital Jackknife commenced action against William Cardinal for theft of fishing nets. In Vital Jackknife's December 20th, 1919 deposition, Vital indicates that he resides at Mosquito Lake for "part of the summer and all winter", and that in the summer of 1919 William Cardinal broke into his home and stole his fish nets.¹⁹³ The nets were later found at Wolf Creek, the residence of the Cardinal family. Jack Knife also reveals the importance of the area as a wintering area, where he would reside "all winter." The criminal case establishes an important timeline that Métis families were residing in the area in the early twentieth century. Moreover, it provides evidence of the importance of fishing activities for Métis peoples, and the community at Wolf Lake. Fishing and thus consuming fish as part of Métis diet was simultaneously a multidimensional practice, as it also supported their Catholic teachings.

Many Métis families at Wolf Lake supplemented their diet by growing gardens. Growing a garden meant residing in the Wolf Lake area for the spring and summer months in addition to trapping in the winter, and therefore on a more permanent year round basis. Métis women would prepare a small plot of dirt and grow vegetables. Typically these gardens consisted of a few rows

¹⁹² Ibid., 21, 56 and 61.

¹⁹³ Information and Complaint Vital Jack Knife, in the Province of Alberta, sworn December 20, 1919. Provincial Archives of Alberta 72.26 file 2587c.

of potatoes, carrots, beans, beats, cabbage, onions, etc.¹⁹⁴ Bob Desjarlais recalls his grandmother's garden: "Squash and oh lord, they used to have a great big garden and carrots, oh my lord they used to have carrots and they used to have an acre of potatoes in because it was a big family hey. They needed lots of vegetables and turnips, oh god they'd grow turnips. . . and well everybody kind of helped themselves to the gardens. Didn't steal anything, just took it hey, and we had cucumbers in our garden."¹⁹⁵ As early as 1916, surveyors in the Wolf Lake area noted that the residents were successfully growing radishes. Fred Seibert noted in his report when surveying the Wolf Lake area that "A garden in section 5 on the shore of Wolf Lake grew a few radishes 14 niches solid root and many 8, 10, and 12 niches during the month of July with no care except spading the fresh sod and planting the seed."¹⁹⁶ Brady notes that in the spring he handed out garden seeds to the local Métis residents.¹⁹⁷ Brady himself recalls that he "worked planting corn, sunflowers, and soy beans in my garden."¹⁹⁸ In early June, Brady planted maple and sugar beet seeds with Walter and Jimmy (Larivière), as well as planted sweet corn, and potatoes.¹⁹⁹ In September, Brady reported a heavy frost and that all gardens at Wolf Lake were completely frozen.²⁰⁰ Although at times families at Wolf Lake relied on relief rations, many also went with very little food, and many diets were primarily "bannock and lard," therefore gardens would have provided essential produce for Métis diet, especially in the difficult winter months.²⁰¹ Families also raised cattles, turkeys, and maintained horses. Many undertook haying

¹⁹⁴ Kermeol, *Un passé Métis au Féminin* : 236-237.

¹⁹⁵ Bob Desjarlais interview: 34.

¹⁹⁶ Seibert, "Survey Report," September 1916.

¹⁹⁷ Brady report, "Wolf Lake Settlements Reports – 1941-1943": 34.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 35.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 37.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 51.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 21.

activities to maintain their livestock.²⁰² Gardens, cattle raising, and making hay were all aspects of Métis continued land-based traditions, and supplemented game and fish diets during economic difficult times. While land-based practices were central to people's survival in the Wolf Lake area other social activities illustrates the connection people had to the land and to their kin. Trapping, hunting, growing gardens and putting up hay for horses were all part of the daily activities at Wolf Lake. These activities occurred in the "Metis pattern of lived performance," that is according to Elmer Ghostkeeper the gathering and harvesting of plants and animals in order to make a living with the land.²⁰³

In the 1930s and 1940s, cutting timber for use and sale was incorporated as an economic activity. Timber was essential to constructing a home, typically a small one room log cabin, and later buildings, a barn and corrals for livestock. Eventually timber would be incorporated as an economic means for Métis families in the twentieth century. Brady worked to establish a co-operative timber operations at Wolf Lake. In Brady's letters and in his Wolf Lake report, a move to co-operative ventures such as timber or fish, was necessary if Métis people were to adapt to a changing economic world. In September 1942, he made arrangements with Mr. Buck to create the "Wolf lake Metis timber operations" and secured an agreement with the Hayward Lumber Company in Edmonton to supply them with Wolf Lake timber for sale.²⁰⁴ The timber operation provided the men with the necessary tools to move the timber to the mill, and to market for sale, once they had cut the wood themselves. For example, Brady noted a discussion with two residents looking to get involved in the timber program, and noted: "I had stated that if they

²⁰² Ibid., 7, 18, 20 and 49.

²⁰³ Ghostkeeper, *Spirit Gifting*: 11.

²⁰⁴ Brady report, "Wolf Lake Settlements Reports – 1941-1943": 53.

proceeded to get lumber the Department would provide two teams if necessary to get out the production.”²⁰⁵ In addition, Brady negotiated a sale and return program for each resident who delivered logs: “. . . closed a deal with Hayward Lumber Co. . . . Hayward bought the logs on the basis of a net return of \$8.00 per m board measure for No. 1 Commercial lumber mill run, and \$6.00 for No. 2 lumber... with the settlers to have the right to take back the No. 2 lumber if they so desired.”²⁰⁶ Brady also noted that each individual who supplied logs to the sawmill for shipment to Hayward Lumber would receive their “respective values credited.”²⁰⁷ As a co-operative Brady likely had a form of dividend or credit system in place to compensate the earnings from the program. Co-operatives were not out of sync with Métis ways of sharing which in turn uplifted and cared for the entire community. Although Wolf Lake community members were self-sustaining through activities with the land such as trapping and hunting, Brady and others, felt a move to other economic activities was necessary. The fear for leaders such as Brady was that increasingly less available land (consumed by settlers) would naturally hinder these traditional activities. Co-operatives were a mechanism



²⁰⁵ Ibid., 53.

²⁰⁶ Brady report, “Wolf Lake Settlements Reports – 1941-1943”: 53.

²⁰⁷ Ibid., 60.

whereas all members would benefit, it was a method that would allow for taking care of one another. In the photograph, Louis Larivière is seen hauling a load of timber at Wolf Lake.²⁰⁸ Brady had attempted to establish a timber co-operative at Wolf Lake, and although it was in operation briefly, it is unknown the reasons for its demise. However, Peter Tomkins does allude to possible competition from non-Métis loggers in a letter to Brady dated February 6, 1959: “. . . the colonists seem to be getting by on what the whites have left of the timber resources, which isn’t much and won’t last long.”²⁰⁹ Although Brady established the timber co-operatives as a new economic activities for the Métis, encroachment by settlers and government continued to threaten Métis peoples’ economic future.

Social Life at Wolf Lake

The way of visiting is an important practice of maintaining kinship and connections among Métis families and communities. According to Métis scholar Cindy Gaudet, the Visiting Way is a “cultural practice of visiting as a Cree and Métis way of being and doing...a euphemism for circle work, a method of governing respectful community relations and protecting the social fabric of Indigenous societies.”²¹⁰ Visiting functioned to reinforce Métis political, social, and familial ties, just as Métis lives can only be understood as multidimensional as Kermoal pointed out²¹¹, visiting therefore played an essential role in the Métis way of life. Gaudet further elaborates on the importance of visiting for Métis peoples:

In Indigenous societies, visiting is perceived as a value (Simpson, 2014). In this context, value as in a principle that guide one’s life. It is a value that guides

²⁰⁸ Photograph Louis Larivière hauling logs at Wolf Lake Spring 1942. Glenbow Archives PA-2218-208.

²⁰⁹ Letter Peter Tomkins to James Brady. February 6, 1959. Glenbow Archives: James Brady fonds, accession M-125-24.

²¹⁰ Janice Cindy Gaudet, “An Indigenous Methodology for Coming to Know Milo Pimatisiwin as Land-Based Initiatives for Indigenous Youth,” PhD Dissertation, (Ottawa: University of Ottawa, 2016): 103 and 115.

²¹¹ Kermoal, “Métis Women’s Environmental Knowledge and the Recognition of Métis Rights”: 129.

the way we conduct ourselves and the ways in which we relate to one another and to the act of coming together. For Indigenous peoples, visiting creates and fortifies connections that unify and build community from the ground up. It is where humour, ideas, silence, news, concerns, pain, knowledge, and arguments are disseminated at a grassroots/ground level. It is political, re-centring authority in a kind of relating that is itself rooted in a cultural, spiritual, and social context. “Like governance, leadership, and every other aspect of reciprocated life, education comes from the roots up” (Simpson, 2014, p. 9). Visiting is a way of life that is unscripted and yet purposeful.²¹²

The visiting way functioned to solidify the Métis community of Wolf Lake. Visiting, embedded in the way of sharing, was also central to people’s lives, ensuring that family and community members were looked after. This often meant hunting together, and sharing fish and game, or even simply stopping by for a visit and to check in on neighbours, family and friends. Social gatherings among the Métis were common as a form of sharing and visiting. According to Diane Payment’s study of the Métis of Batoche, Saskatchewan: “evening gatherings amongst one another was another way of entertaining.”²¹³ According to Métis Béatrice (Lépine) Boucher of St. Louis, Saskatchewan, during winter, dances took place almost nightly: “In winter, we danced often every night.”²¹⁴ Métis peoples loved music, and dances, whereas hospitality and generosity was more than expected, but was a social rule.²¹⁵ Similar to the dances held in Batoche, the community of St. Madeleine also recalls the dances as an integral part of Métis social life. Joe Venne of St. Madeleine recalls:

We were a nation of people that liked pleasure, you know, and had a lot of parties. If they had any sense, they’d have a party every night. But a lot of the other people didn’t do that; if they had a party a month, they were happy. But the Metis people, they were a people that liked pleasure, you know, and there was a lot of partying. Every week. We never missed – twice a week, three times a week. When it came to the holidays, Christmas and New Year’s, we used to go for two, three

²¹² Gaudet, “An Indigenous Methodology for Coming to Know Milo Pimatisiwin”: 117.

²¹³ Diane Payment, *Les Gens Libres – Otipemisiwak : Batoche, Saskatchewan 1870-1930*, 57. “la veillée chez l’un et chez l’autre est une autre façon de se divertir.” Translation by Chantal Roy-Denis.

²¹⁴ Ibid. “L’hiver, on dansait souvent tous les soirs.” Translation by Chantal Roy-Denis

²¹⁵ Payment, *Les Gens Libres*: 57.

weeks at a time, dancing every night, partying every night. Other people didn't have that style.²¹⁶

Similar to other Métis communities, dances were common at Wolf Lake, with residents taking turns to host such evening gatherings. For example, in March 1942, Joe Paul held a dance at his home where “the villagers all attended the function.”²¹⁷ On January 1, 1942, Larivière hosted a dance. On January 10, 1942, Brady attended another dance being held at Wolf Lake in the evening. Two weeks later on January 24, 1942, James Brady attended yet another dance, this time hosted by Frank Cardinal. Not only were these social occasions, they were also opportunities to discuss social and political matters occurring and affecting the community. Brady noted that on December 1, 1941, he attended a dance at John Cardinal's “in order to meet settlers and establish contacts. . . had a number of personal discussions with various settlers.”²¹⁸ An important time for celebration for Métis families was New Years day, or la journée de l'an. New Years dances were common, as was the tradition of travelling and visiting friends and family throughout the beginning of the New Year. Wolf Lake was no exception to this tradition, as Brady notes that Mrs. Desjardins informed him of the New Year's dance being held at the lake.²¹⁹ Visiting served varied purposes, often stopping by for a visit also was a time to share meat, berries, provisions with others or simply news. As the visiting way was a political and social element, so too did it function to ensure that community members were looked after. Whether to check on family members who were sick, children, elders, visiting created a safety net in the community. Brady often checked in on families in the area, specifically when it became known that some were sick. For example, Desjardins' baby had fallen ill, with Brady

²¹⁶ Zeilig and Zeilig, *Ste. Madeleine*: 43.

²¹⁷ Brady report, “Wolf Lake Settlements Reports – 1941-1943”: 28.

²¹⁸ Brady Report, “Wolf Lake Settlements Reports – 1941-1943”: 2.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 62.

assuming it was tuberculosis and was to look at securing health provisions for the baby.²²⁰ In doing so, Métis communities enacted a “political, re-centring authority in a kind of relating that is itself rooted in a cultural, spiritual, and social context,” which allowed them to fortify their community based on shared values.²²¹

Métis families whether wintering on the trapline, fishing and hunting in the spring and fall, while simultaneously picking berries and medicines, looked out for one another. A relational accountability to one another was central to Métis communities. Often these economic activities, ones which were critical in ensuring the families sustenance for the winter ahead, were also opportunities to visit and socialize. These activities supported roles and responsibility to our kinship, and thus tempered any hierarchical system. It was a method to staying connected and caring for one another. Visiting also served a political purpose. Métis Jaime Koebel recalls growing up in Lac La Biche, Alberta in the late twentieth century. On one occasion Koebel recollects accompanying her uncle who was campaigning for a position of vice-president for their local Métis Nation. Koebel quickly learned the true essence of campaigning: “After making the rounds to about seven homes that day, I discovered that campaigning was just a fancy word for visiting.”²²² Social life of the Métis at Wolf Lake hinged on the importance of caring for one another, whether stopping by to ensure everyone was well cared for, gathering together according to seasonal activities, or a time to share news and discuss politics, visiting was foundational value.

²²⁰ Ibid., 21.

²²¹ Gaudet, “An Indigenous Methodology for Coming to Know Milo Pimatisiwin”: 117.

²²² Jaime Koebel, “My Story : Reflections on Growing up in Lac La Biche,” in *The Long Journey of a Forgotten people : Métis Identities & Family Histories*, ed. Ute Lischke and David T. McNab, (Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 2007): 359.

Métis peoples moved seasonally throughout the territory, typically staying with family members for winter or gathering to hunt, fish or pick berries and medicines. The family connections functioned as nodes on a larger landscape. Each node was a point of seasonal accommodation, where families came together, and where families knew they were welcomed. According to Northern Alberta Métis resident Irene Gregoire, log cabin homes on the trapline were networks of cabins, which functioned as a safety net.²²³ Throughout the fur trade in the eighteenth century, Métis families maintained a sharing system. This system of sharing was based on reciprocity for the assistance received, and thus helped maintain good relations. According to Liam Haggarty, the system of sharing manifested when families “reciprocated the aid it received from Métis and other indigenous people by sharing resources and participating in a wide range of exchange activities. On a regular basis they shared food within their immediate families and with close in-laws, especially in times of need.”²²⁴ Elder Jules Daigneault of Île-à-la-Crosse also reiterates the importance of sharing and how “Everybody used to share. Nobody was stingy, nobody...”²²⁵ Sharing was often expressed in subtle ways, such as sharing your home with family and friends, or leaving your home open and available even if you were away. For example, Irene Gregoire recalls days living on the trapline:

Everybody, those days, you know, if somebody went by and they needed something, they went in your cabin and took it. You know, because you left your cabin ready all the time. If you had anything left edible you leave it and leave wood, eh.²²⁶

²²³ Fort McMurray Metis Local, *Mark of The Metis*: 24.

²²⁴ Haggarty, “Métis Economics”: 219-220.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*, 229.

²²⁶ Fort McMurray Métis Local, *Mark of the Métis*: 24.

Hunting, trapping and fishing with family members were also grounded in principles of kinship and sharing. One of the key values of Métis way of life was this relational accountability to one another. According to Jules Daigneault: “When people used to go hunting, the whole family went. They all went in the river and they found a certain spot where it’s good to set up tents. That’s where the family would stay while the men would go further on to go shoot a moose or set nets for something.”²²⁷ It was a time for passing along important harvesting knowledge and techniques to younger generations, learning and teaching about the land occurred within the home. Annie Michalko from the Fort McMurray region remembers the joy in harvesting with family:

Those were the fun times when the whole family would go fishing, and we’d have a fish fry by the river. You know, my mom would clean fish like nobody’s business. And then we went blueberry picking as a family, too. I mean, those were the fund times. We were poor, but didn’t even know it. Everybody would speak Cree, and we would just have a wonderful time.²²⁸

At Wolf Lake similar activities were entrenched to ensure families looked after each other, while passing on important values and skills to the next generations.

As part of the larger Beaver River basin region, Wolf Lake members maintained connections with families across the region. Wolf Lake acted as a stopping place for people moving through the larger Beaver River area. Often these individuals stopped for visits with Wolf Lake residents, or to trade goods with the local residents. Others came through simply to visit old friends. For example, in January 1943 a Mr. Louis Soulou of Brosseau who fished on Wolf Lake the past winter “passed through and camped for dinner.”²²⁹ The Wolf Lake area

²²⁷ Haggerty, “Métis Economics”: 229.

²²⁸ Fort McMurray Métis Local, *Mark of the Métis*: 1.

²²⁹ Brady report, “Wolf Lake Settlements Reports – 1941-1943”: 63.

functioned as an important stopping place in the Beaver River area. For example, Brady noted in 1943 that “James McDonald of Saddle Lake passed through en route to the Bare Naked Hills.”²³⁰ McDonald stopped to speak with Brady, and recounted stories of dealings with Wolf Lake resident Joseph Louie. These relations reflect the interconnected nature of the residents of the larger Beaver River basin area.

In examining the lived experience of Wolf Lake Métis families and community, it is evident that a layered and profoundly interwoven relationality with the land was rooted in their common values and way of life. These relationships emerged from the fur trade freeman in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to become a site to winter on the trapline, for gathering whitefish, hunting game, trapping, growing gardens and raising hay for livestock. Wolf Lake was not a site in isolation but rather a node connected to other Métis communities in the area. The annual cycle and daily activities were informed by the land, and their intimate knowledge and respectful relationship with their environment, which provided them with its gifts of plants and animals.

²³⁰ Ibid., 20.

Chapter 5: The Politics of Land & A Shrinking Métis Territory

In building on Chapter 4, this chapter will examine the complexity of the land politics that functioned to disinherit the Métis people at Wolf Lake. This chapter answers my research question by examining how these systems functioned to disinherit Métis peoples from the land, their territory and the place that fostered their traditions. It will unravel the complex colonial matrix of land dis/possession. Furthermore, how colonial land possession and its systems that support resource extraction, also impact the Métis Association of Alberta's positionality. The aim of this chapter is to better understand the varied politics of the land in juxtaposition to the Métis way of making a living on the land, the Wolf Lake traditional systems, and diplomatic traditions. It will position the cumulative impacts of politics of land on both a micro and macro level. As well it examines the consequences of a shrinking territory and erosion of community traditional systems born by the communities.

For colonial entities the land is a mechanism to further their colonial expansion, the land must be used in accordance with the vision of “expansion” for permanent settlement, and to benefit capitalist ambitions through resource extraction. In examining the varied politics of land, it becomes apparent that examining power as a top down mechanisms is but one dimension of nuanced relationships. My initial understanding was based on a simple dynamic of power relations - whereas the government or the state inflicts its hegemonic power upon the Métis peoples, who in turn are displaced from their homelands. On one side, the government, eroding Indigenous livelihood and sovereignty for its own gains, and on the receiving end of such erosive behaviour, the Métis lose. The nuanced and intricacy of politics of land does not simply function directly from government onto Indigenous peoples. For the Métis community at Wolf Lake, power struggles between the Métis Association of Alberta, and Provincial government cascaded over to negatively impact their connection to territory. In addition, a changing economic landscape, with increased interest in oil extraction in the 1950s and 1960s, further threatened Wolf Lake. Finally, Federal government establishment of the Primrose Air Weapons Range severed the mobility and connectivity of the Wolf Lake community. Although Brady and the MAA were involved in the power dynamics, Brady’s efforts to establish co-operative ventures was his method to combat the encroaching government controls over the land. Métis peoples and their relationship to Wolf Lake, a relationship fostered through generations of making a living with the land, bore the brunt of these power struggles. It was the Métis people of Wolf Lake who were inundated by the vestiges of power struggles over land. Governments’ concepts of how the land could yield to their wills ultimately functioned to disinherit the Métis community of Wolf Lake.

In Alberta, government resource development took many forms, such as Federal government settlements policies which allowed white settlers' to develop the land for agriculture, resource extraction, military actions, and trapline and wildlife management conservation regulations. These activities are in contradiction to a Métis way of making a living with the land, as they aim to make a living off the land. According to Ghostkeeper such activities "view the land as an object, a commodity for exchange, to be dominated by man and machine."²³¹ Furthermore, those that are concerned with such exploitative activities, and who fear the impacts on the sacred relationship with the land, are often ignored. In examining the Wolf Lake region, it becomes evident that first the Federal government and later Provincial government of Alberta were interested in the region for its agricultural potential, natural resources such as timber, and eventually oil extraction and military potential (Primrose Air Weapons Range). In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the Federal and Provincial governments sought to establish agricultural communities in Western Canada, and the Métis on the settlements were to adhere to its ambitions. However, by the 1960s and 1970s agricultural development would cease to be the primary extractable resource, rather oil, and timber would become essential to government economic goals. Simultaneously, during the post Second World War period the possibility of nuclear war further altered the Federal government's view of the Wolf Lake region. In contrast to colonial expansion and extraction, the Métis Association of Alberta believed a land base for Métis people, could improve Métis socio-economic conditions, and function as redress for historic grievances.²³² For the MAA land was their inherent right as Aboriginal peoples. For local Métis communities the land was their home, where they made a living with the land. Examining the politics of land reveals how colonialism functions to

²³¹ Ghostkeeper, *Spirit Gifting*: 74.

²³² Saunders, "No Other Weapon": 350.

disinherit, whether Federal or Provincial governments. However, the MAA's struggle to establish and maintain the settlements necessitated they operate within a colonial government system. In doing so, the MAA's battles and concessions with the provincial government had ramifications for Métis people at Wolf Lake. The varied and nuanced nature of the politics of land erodes local Métis connection to place, and the ability to uphold the elements that inform all aspects of their lives and community, making a living with the land.

Surveying the Land

Surveying the land was the first step in consuming Indigenous territories. Surveyors first assessed regions of western Canada for agriculture, but simultaneously for natural resource potential. In 1911, Dominion Land Surveyor, W.H Young entered the Wolf Lake region and reported an "abundance of spruce and tamarack for fuel grows in the township, but not in sufficient quantities for a timber limit."²³³ Fred Seibert, Dominion Lands Surveyor, entered the Wolf Lake area to survey its potential in September 1916. Seibert noted that the "soil is good and will make good agricultural land when cleared of the growth of poplar, spruce, jackpine, tamarack and willow..."²³⁴ In Seibert's survey notebooks he reports that "fuel is plentiful in the timber that covers the surface. There are no stone quarries or minerals."²³⁵ Seibert made repeated comments on the regions hay potential, even noting that "good hay meadows... none of them are large but the quality of grass is good. From forty to fifty ton might be cut along altogether. Good grazing grass grows over 60% of this township."²³⁶ In the early twentieth century, the Canadian government's intention for the Wolf Lake lands were clearly laid out; agriculture and livestock

²³³ W.H. Young, "Survey Report," September 1911

²³⁴ Seibert, "Survey Report," September 1916.

²³⁵ Ibid.

²³⁶ Ibid.

raising would support permanent settlement. However, by the mid to late twentieth century governments' interest in the area would shift to other resource extraction.

For the Canadian and Provincial government, agriculture was the proper use of land. Activities such as hunting, trapping, and fishing for livelihood were deemed “primitive” activities in comparison. Such an attitude is reflected throughout the Ewing Commission’s Report in 1936. Furthermore, agriculture was to serve as a moral and uplifting remedy to the “backward ways” of Métis people. Only through agriculture could they become self-sufficient, and improve their socio-economic conditions in accordance with colonial standards. The Ewing Commission recommendations established land settlements for the Métis to undertake agricultural activities, and raise cattle. The government did not provide the land based on Métis rights as original inhabitants, but rather as a social welfare scheme. The Ewing Commission report concluded that a “form of farm colonies is the most effective... method of dealing with the problem.”²³⁷ The Commission’s logic was that it “seems to be that he [the Métis] must either change his mode of life to conform with that of the white inhabitants or he must gradually disappear.”²³⁸ The government believed that Métis inner transformation would only occur once he adopted the ways of the white man. Labour, such as agriculture, would control bodily behaviour which was a necessary step in the transformation process. As such, each family on the settlement would be allocated a piece of land, although they would not hold title, they were expected to clear, and seed the land. They were also encouraged to grow gardens, and raise livestock. Activities deemed “nomadic” such as hunting and trapping were to be curbed, to the point that eventually as the Ewing Commission determined “the tendency will be to make the

²³⁷ Sawchuk et al. *Metis Land Rights in Alberta*: 202.

²³⁸ Alberta Government, “Report of the Royal Commission”: 4.

half-breed more and more dependent on farming and stock-raising. This is the aim and purpose of this plan.”²³⁹ Reforming Métis people from hunting and trapping was essential, as government viewed these activities as idle/un-occupied sites. In addition, like that of the Federal government, idleness could be curbed and progress attained through permanent settlement. Métis peoples’ seasonal mobility was deemed primitive, and their mobile way of life deemed an obstacle to their “rehabilitation”. As such the Commission recommendation to establish settlements was to serve the purpose of reforming what it deemed as Métis peoples’ deficiencies. These deficiencies were reasoned as an inability to compete with white settlers, a lack of business foresight, and primitive backward economy. The Ewing Commission Report stated “the readiness with which the half-breed succumbed to the wiles and persuasions of the speculators in pertaining to scrip indicates his lack of business foresight... his business transactions were of the most simple character.”²⁴⁰ The Ewing Commission did not recognize that hunting and trapping, as well as seasonal movements were essential elements to Métis peoplehood. Nor did it recognize that the reduced mobility due to increased settlement had eroded certain aspects of Métis traditions. The end goal for the Commission, and thus the Provincial government, was to establish Métis peoples on land bases where they could be economically and morally uplifted by agriculture and stock raising. In no way did the Commission recognize the importance of land for Métis peoplehood.

The 1930s with the rise of the Métis Association of Alberta marked a prominent first instances of un-silencing, and visibility of Métis politics. It was a reawakening, a rendering visible, of Métis peoples’ political voices; voices that had all but been silenced after 1885. The Métis Association of Alberta’s fight to create the settlements was first and foremost to establish

²³⁹ Ibid., 10.

²⁴⁰ Alberta Government, “Report of the Royal Commission”: 3.

land bases to improve Métis peoples socio-economic conditions. The MAA nonetheless believed that the settlements were based on the inherent rights of the Métis people as Indigenous. Once the settlements were created, the MAA fight was to ensure Métis peoples' became self-sufficient and self-governing. Further, the MAA worked to ensure that it was the legitimate and recognized political entity of the settlements. For the government, the settlements were established to improve what they deemed were Métis deficiency and idleness primarily through agriculture and livestock raising. If the settlements proved unable to do so, the government held the power to withdraw the settlement scheme entirely. The MAA faced a quandary: ensure the settlements supported socio-economic conditions to government standards, and if they did not, the possibility of losing all the settlements. During the 1940s and 1950s, the MAA slowly lapsed into irrelevancy. The Provincial government established supervisors on settlements to oversee day to day activities, as well as councils from each settlement. The MAA and its role in governing the settlement, and Brady's and Norris' vision that the MAA would be the governing body, was not possible with the government controls. As such, Brady and Norris became increasingly disillusioned with the governance structure of the MAA, with Brady and Norris both playing less or no role by the late 1940s. It is evident that the MAA was increasingly concerned with the security of the settlement lands, especially considering that Marlboro, and Touchwood settlements had been closed in the 1950s. As the MAA lapsed into irrelevancy so too did a unified voice for the settlements. Following such, the Wolf Lake settlement community was facing increased hunting and trapping regulations, the closure of their school, the establishment of a bombing range, and eventually oil extraction. The Wolf Lake settlement and the territories by which families had made a living and fostered good relations was increasingly marginalized and shrinking. The Métis political organization was unable to support them.

Hunting and Trapping Regulations

As lands were surveyed, and settlement increased, Métis seasonal movements were increasingly restricted. Restrictions on mobility would further be eroded in the twentieth century, with the introduction of restrictive trapping regulations. In the late nineteenth century, the first game regulations was introduced and came into force in 1896. Specifically geared toward “protecting” buffalo and bison from First Nation hunters the *Act for the Preservation of Game in the Unorganized Portion of the North West Territories of Canada* stipulated that “except as hereinafter provided, buffalo and bison shall not be hunted, taken, killed, shot at, wounded, injured, or molested in any way, at any time of the year until the first day of January, A.D. 1900.”²⁴¹ As identified by Brian Calliou, these restrictions seriously impacted First Nations hunting and sustenance.²⁴² The initial regulations implemented by the government first restricted Aboriginal peoples hunting practices, shortly thereafter regulations would come into force that would also impact their trapping practices.

During the 1920s and 1930s discussions grew around the regulating of trapping activities. Stimulating these debates among government, and community, was the continued rise of conservation or wildlife management. According to Monique Passelac-Ross “the imposition on Aboriginal peoples of a wildlife management paradigm focusing on game management gradually

²⁴¹ Brian Louis Calliou, “*Losing the Game: Wildlife Conservation and the Regulation of First Nations Hunting in Alberta, 1880-1930*,” Masters Thesis, Faculty of Law, University of Alberta, (Edmonton: University of Alberta, Faculty of Law, 2000): 14.

²⁴² Ibid.

displaced the Aboriginal community-based wildlife management system.”²⁴³ Provincial governments, throughout the Prairie Provinces were ever more concerned with what it deemed depletion and erosion of wildlife populations. Rather than recognize its own actions in eroding wildlife populations through its altering of the landscape, such as increased settlement and clearing of land, roads, railways and timber clear cutting, governments viewed Aboriginal peoples hunting practices as problematic, and took steps to curb their traditional hunting activities.²⁴⁴ In Alberta, the Provincial government and conservationists often blamed Aboriginal peoples for the depletion of animal resources, believing that they over hunted game thus used wildlife irresponsibly.²⁴⁵ For example, Aboriginal people were removed and barred from hunting in national parks such as Banff National Park soon after its creation in 1887, although some such as the Stoney and Kootenai had important connections to the area.²⁴⁶ The western secular view that aimed to impose order upon the land and its wildlife, was directly in conflict with Aboriginal peoples systems that ensured renewal of wildlife, and reciprocity with the land and its animals. Aboriginal systems functioned to ensure wildlife resources were sustainable, they management their environment based on important land stewardship traditions. A Métis individual from Northern Alberta explains the systems:

See, the people were managers. They didn't go in and kill all the beaver off, because there'd be nothing left next spring. They didn't kill all the moose off. They didn't kill cow moose certain times of the year because if you kill one cow moose, you kill five moose, because they could produce that many before their children would start producing.²⁴⁷

²⁴³ Monique M. Passelac-Ross, “The Trapping Rights of Aboriginal Peoples in Northern Alberta,” in *Canadian Institute of Resource Law Occasional Paper #15*, (Calgary: April 2015): 13.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 12 and 13.

²⁴⁵ Theodore Binnema and Melanie Niemi, “Let the Line Be Drawn Now': Wilderness, Conservation, and the Exclusion of Aboriginal People from Banff National Park in Canada,” in *Environmental History*, Vol. 11, No. 4 (Oct., 2006): 734. See also Calliou, “Losing the Game”: 3.

²⁴⁶ Binnema and Niemi, “Let the Line Be Drawn Now’”: 726.

²⁴⁷ Fort McMurray Local, *Mark of the Métis*: 83. (the excerpt does not identify the name of the individual)

These government enforced regulations overlooked and disregarded the important Aboriginal systems of managing their environment and its resources.

As early as 1907, Alberta began implementing its wildlife management system, one aimed to conserve the wildlife resources in the province. Conservation or wildlife management systems implicated Aboriginal peoples in multiple ways. This was put into motion with the passing of the first Alberta Game Act in 1907. The Alberta Game Act introduced limits on trapping fur bearing animals, such as a five year memorandum on trapping beaver.²⁴⁸ In the 1920s, the Act was followed up with a trapping license system, which required trappers to apply and receive permits in order to trap and also stipulated a tax (Royalty) on all fur pelts.²⁴⁹ And although the Ewing Commission which established the settlements provided that Métis would be permitted to hunt and fish on settlements, they were nonetheless required to purchase licenses and permits. Simultaneously, the provincial government restricted their freedom to hunt and fish throughout the year by creating specific open seasons.²⁵⁰ These hunting seasons did not consider Métis traditional knowledge and annual hunting cycles. For example, government regulation's open duck hunting season in the fall, whereas Métis traditionally hunted ducks in the spring.²⁵¹ Fort McMurray region Métis Ron Huppie explains the importance of the spring duck hunt: "When they [ducks] come back in the spring, they're nice and fat because they've been in the grain fields down south. In the fall when they go back, they're skinny, they're not any good."²⁵²

²⁴⁸ David F. Hatler and Alisson M. Beal, "Trapping in Alberta," *Trapper Education*. (Westlock, Alberta: Alberta Trappers Association, 2014): 11. http://www.albertatrappers.com/pdf/educationManual_011-017.pdf

²⁴⁹ Hatler and Beal, "Trapping in Alberta": 11.

²⁵⁰ Julia D. Harrison, *Métis: People Between Two Worlds*, (Calgary: Glenbow Alberta Institute, 1985): 94.

²⁵¹ Fort McMurray Metis Local, *Mark of the Métis*: 132.

²⁵² *Ibid.*

Not only did hunting and trapping regulations create added expense of purchasing licenses and paying royalties, they disregarded the layered understanding of Métis traditions.

With the Natural Resource Transfer Agreement to the Prairie Provinces in 1930, Alberta seized the opportunity to further implement regulations on trapping. In the early 1940s Alberta introduced the Registered Fur Management Areas (RFMAs) as part of the Game Act. This system established individual trapping boundaries (“trap lines”). Not only did the new regulations required trappers to acquire permits but it further established a list of regulations and trapping area registration requirements. The requirements stipulated that no trapping was permitted unless an area was registered, yearly renewal of trap line and if renewal was not complete by a specific date the trapline could be registered or transferred to someone else, a \$10 registration fee, transfer of trapline to another individual required permission, and the limit of one trapline per person.²⁵³ The goal of the trapline system was to provide individual trappers with exclusive rights within a specific area (i.e. trapline).²⁵⁴ According to Métis trapper Barb Hermenson, who trapped and raised her family along the Athabasca River- Fort McKay region:

Before the government trapline system was put in place, trappers could essentially ‘go anywhere’. Trapping areas were not defined by straight lines in those days. People would go where the animals were. Trapping and hunting was managed by local peoples and according to local traditions. People would get together in the bush and sort out who would go where. Trapping areas were often shared between brothers or male cousins, and handed down to male family members.²⁵⁵

²⁵³ *An act for the Protection of Game* "The Game Act" [1946, c.4, s.1].

²⁵⁴ Fort McMurray Metis Local, *Mark of the Métis*: 110.

²⁵⁵ Sherri Ladouceur and Barb Hermansen, “Barb Hermansen: Her Story – The Last Woman to Raise Children on the Athabasca River,” Fort Chipewyan Metis Local 125 (June 2011): 7
<https://www.ceaa-acee.gc.ca/050/documents/p65505/96034E.pdf>

Trapping regulations not only restricted where Métis families could establish a trap line, and thus shrinking trapping territory, it further eroded Métis trapping territory traditions, and their ability to manage resources based on their environmental understandings. Prior to these regulations Métis people had an established trapping system, according to Roland Woodward: “Now, the understanding back then, you see, you could use a guy’s trail but couldn’t set a snare or a trap on his trail. If you crossed his trail, you could set your snares. But while you’re on his trail, that was his trail, and it was his trapline.”²⁵⁶ The new trapping regulations further opened the door to non-Aboriginal trappers, often using traplines to bring in sports trappers and hunters. Woodward further emphasized the impacts of the regulations: “When they started setting up traplines . . . came another migration of white trappers. They bought up traplines – robbed people out of their traplines, and all of a sudden became trapline holders in this whole area in the ‘40s, ‘50s, ‘60s. It became a private hunting area. And they got guiding licenses.”²⁵⁷ The trapline regulations alienated Métis people from the land where they had trapped for generations, and increased competition by non-Aboriginal trappers created tensions. By the 1960s traplines soon became the interest of oil companies. In the Fort McMurray region, oil companies purchased traplines from Métis families in order to expand oil development.²⁵⁸ Although there is no evidence supported that this did occur at Wolf Lake, it appears oil companies were also taking advantage of trapline regulations.

Trapline legislation also made it difficult for individuals holding trapping areas prior to the legislation coming into force to properly register them according to the new legislation. In

²⁵⁶ Fort McMurray Metis Local, *Mark of the Métis*: 110.

²⁵⁷ Fort McMurray Metis Local, *Mark of the Métis*: 110.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 111.

not adhering to the new trapping legislation of registering one's trap line with the government, one would lose access to the trapping area, even if the trapper had been established in the area for generations. The trapping area could simply be registered to another individual without the trapper's knowledge. In his discussions with trappers at Wolf Lake, Brady indicates that those to the north of the lake are not opposed to registered trap line and "do not desire to oppose the well established white trapper." Rather according to Brady "Their main fear is that due to their ignorance of the legislation their interests may be disregarded."²⁵⁹ The fear was Métis at Wolf Lake would unknowingly fail to comply with the government imposed trapping system and thus lose the trapping areas. In fact, their fears were well founded, in April 1942, Brady travels to Mosquito Lake just near Wolf Lake to visit some Métis living there. He noted that the "local Mosquito Lake Metis are having difficulty with the white trappers who have registered all the best trapping territory and highlight dissatisfied with the method in which lines were allocated in many instances their protestations being ignored."²⁶⁰ The new regulations functioned to further disinherit Métis trappers by establishing a foreign trapping systems, one which created barriers to registration and disregarded their own management and ethics of trapping.

Wolf Lake community members had developed trapping management systems, rooted in kinship networks, similar to those described above by Barb Hermansen. The newly implemented government trapping legislation disregarded the Métis trapping territory traditions. Métis diplomatic traditions are exemplified through trapping ethics. This included boundaries of certain individuals or family trapping areas, along with respectful trapping, which extended not only to Métis families but also non-Aboriginal families. Maintaining good relations regarding trapping

²⁵⁹ Brady report, "Wolf Lake Settlements Reports – 1941-1943": 5

²⁶⁰ Brady report, "Wolf Lake Settlements Reports – 1941-1943": 32.

territory was key to Métis peoples' ability to conduct their trapping in a Métis way of doing things. An individual who did not ethically trap was deemed imprudent. At Wolf Lake individuals and their families had trapped in the area since prior to the 1890s. These individuals included Paul Cardinal, Isadore Desjarlais, George Desjarlais, Isidore Cardinal, Charlie Cardinal and Frank Cardinal, who according to Brady were "full time trappers with a high degree of proficiency in their avocation."²⁶¹ They had resided north of Wolf Lake since prior to the 1890s, and most had been trapping in the area since their childhood. These families upheld respectful trapping practices, such as recognizing trapping territories. For example, Brady explained in his report that "The Metis have always respected the unrecorded right of a trapper to a particular but roughly defined trapper. This custom has been respect for years by the Metis and the professional white trapper.[sic]"²⁶² Essential to the ethical nature of trapping between Métis and white trappers is "Métis diplomatic tradition," whereas "non-Indigenous outsiders were able to situate themselves in the prairie political universe, using Indigenous protocols and traditions to do so."²⁶³ Moreover, as highlighted by Robert Innes in examining the Cowessess Band, such practices established ". . . prescribed behaviors required in the maintenance of respectful kinship relations with Cowessess people."²⁶⁴ During the nineteenth century, these traditions were the basis of Indigenous relations throughout vast territories, since these "Indigenous diplomatic systems were already fully formed when Europeans attempted to enter relations with Indigenous peoples, and therefore Europeans were obligated to do so according to Indigenous

²⁶¹ Ibid., 5.

²⁶² Brady report, "Wolf Lake Settlements Reports – 1941-1943": 5.

²⁶³ Gaudry, "Kaa-tipeyimishoyaahk - 'We are those who own ourselves'": 135.

²⁶⁴ Robert Innes, "Elder Brother, the Law of the People, and Contemporary Kinship Practices of Cowessess First Nation Members: Reconceptualizing Kinship in American Indian Studies Research," in *American Indian and Cultural Research Journal*, vol 34, no. 2 (2010): 33.

expectations.”²⁶⁵ Non-Aboriginal and Métis trapping activities were able to co-exist, along Métis diplomatic tradition that respected the unrecorded right of a trapper. It was Métis traditions of self-governance and regulating along their understanding of their environment and land. Difficulties did nonetheless arise when newcomers did not respect these political tradition. For example, at Wolf Lake a non-Aboriginal trapper’s disregard for these traditions resulted in frustration among Métis and non-Aboriginal trappers. Brady explains: “Otterberg is the only trapper who has disregarded the established ethic and is consequently disliked by both Métis and white trappers. The Metis lay claim to no other territory. They only desire what they believe to be theirs by right of primary possession. They have trapped this area since childhood.”²⁶⁶ To not conduct oneself according to Métis traditions was to disrespect local Métis communities’ political diplomatic traditions. The Wolf Lake Métis community acted according to long standing Indigenous diplomatic systems that developed in Rupertsland and were still strongly in place at the end of the nineteenth century, and to which they continued to adhere in the early twentieth century. Although some Wolf Lake trappers did not oppose the new trapping regulations and its requirement of registering ones trap line, they nonetheless feared the possibility (and eventually reality) of failing to comply to the foreign system and the encroachment of non-Aboriginal trappers.

Military Expansion

Trapping regulations introduced in the 1940s impeded Métis trapping activities. At Wolf Lake, another form of impediment would further reduce their trapping territory. The Primrose Lake Air Weapons range was developed in 1954 from an agreement between Alberta and Saskatchewan

²⁶⁵ Gaudry, “Kaa-tipeyimishoyaahk - ‘We are those who own ourselves’”: 137.

²⁶⁶ Brady report, “Wolf Lake Settlements Reports – 1941-1943”: 5.

Provincial governments and the Federal government. The Range was established without any prior consultation with Indigenous communities (whether Métis settlements or First Nations).²⁶⁷ According to a newspaper article, and an interview conducted with members of the Wolf Lake settlement, one reason the government closed the settlement in 1960 was in order to expand the Primrose Lake Air Weapons Range. The Weapons Range would eventually abut the Wolf Lake Settlement. As the Cold War erupted in the post war period, the Canadian Federal government's defense strategy grew exponentially. By 1949 as Canada became involved in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) defense training to send assistance to allies overseas increased substantially, between 1947 and 1955 the Royal Canadian Air Force grew from 11,000 to 50,000.²⁶⁸ Training grounds and strategic bomb testing sites were essential for Canada to fulfill its role in NATO, and protect against Soviet nuclear threats. The Primrose Lake Air Weapons Range provided an ideal air base training area do to exactly that. The bombing range was established in 1954, it stretched over the provincial border of Alberta and Saskatchewan along the 55th parallel, and encompassed a total of roughly 4,490 square miles (see Appendix 7, p. 140).²⁶⁹ The following map (See Appendix 8, p.141) indicates traplines around Wolf Lake in 1961, after the establishment of the Air Weapons Range and the rescinding of the settlements.²⁷⁰ Isidore Cardinal's trapline is still registered, however, it has been clearly reduced due to the air weapons range. Similarly, other trappers in the area are experiencing reduced trapline due to the incorporation of the range. According to Chipeniuk's discussion with Adrian Hope many

²⁶⁷ Indian Claims Commission, "Primrose Lake Air Weapons Range Report," (August 17, 1993): 1.

²⁶⁸ P. Whitney Lackenbauer, *Battle Grounds: The Canadian Military and Aboriginal Lands*, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007): 144.

²⁶⁹ Lackenbauer, *Battle Ground*:145.

²⁷⁰ Department of Lands and Forests, "Trapline Map" 1961, Provincial Archives of Alberta, GR1990.0377, file 2898.

families completely lost their traplines due to the establishment of the bombing range.²⁷¹ In a newspaper article, Isadore Cardinal told his children and grandchildren that the government wanted the Métis out of Wolf Lake as the community was too close to the bombing range. Isadore's son Gabe says: "the cruise missiles used to come down right over the lake, where they were supposed to land if they were in trouble."²⁷² In the newspaper article, Henry Dejarlais, Métis President of Zone Two, shared that: "The government said they bought the land from the Métis . . . [but] Isadore and the Elders say no money ever changed hands."²⁷³ According to scholar Cora Weber-Pillwax, who had conducted an interview with an "old man" who refused to leave the Wolf Lake settlement, the lands where the old man lived were eventually taken over by the bombing range after his death.²⁷⁴ The Indian Claims Commission report in 1993, examining the impacts of the Range on First Nations communities in Alberta and specific the Cold Lake First Nation, concluded:

There can be no dispute that the exclusion of the people of Cold Lake from the air weapons range substantially impaired their livelihoods and their access to food and other resources. The results of that event continue as a sense of loss and a source of grievance in the community and the results are still painfully evident. The damage to the community was not only financial, it was psychological and spiritual.²⁷⁵

The bombing range severely impacted Métis families ability to trap in the Wolf Lake area. Trapping based on diplomatic traditions, and rooted in management traditions informed by the land functioned to support Métis families and communities, along with future generations.

²⁷¹ Chipeniuk, *Lakes of the Lac La Biche District*: 151.

²⁷² Edie Landry, "Local metis pioneer," newspaper article, unknown newspaper and unknown date. Taken from Facebook page "Wolf Lake Settlement."

²⁷³ Ibid.

²⁷⁴ Weber-Pillwax, "Indigenous Researchers and Indigenous Research Methods": 88.

²⁷⁵ Indian Claims Commission Report: 118.

Government implemented hunting and trapping restrictions, as well as the reduction and loss or trapping areas disregarded these Métis traditions.

Oil Extraction

Within in a newspaper article, Isadore Desjarlais mentions how he further believed that the Wolf Lake settlement was closed since the government wanted the land for oil development and recreation.²⁷⁶ Oil was also a sought after resource during the 1960s and 1970s. British Petroleum Canada began testing in the Wolf Lake area for oil extraction, with the first of three wells being drilled in 1964.²⁷⁷ Later in 1964 BP launched a pilot project to extract oil from the Wolf Lake area.²⁷⁸ Simultaneously, in 1975 the Métis Association of Alberta was aware, and concerned, regarding the Provincial government's oil contract application at Wolf Lake. In his report to the MAA, Mr. Mike Woodward reports that "The possibilities of British Petroleum setting up a ten (10) year experimental project in the Wolf Lake area seems very realistic at this point. Construction date is tentative for July, August, of 1977."²⁷⁹ Since the 1980s oil extraction expanded in the area. In 1982, a commercial oil project known as Wolf Lake Phase I became operational.²⁸⁰ Interest in the area for its resources were clearly underway by the 1960s, and in full swing by the 1970s. Government whether Federal or Provincial were aware of the value of Wolf Lake, first for agricultural possibilities, then as a bombing/training range in the Cold war period, and eventually for oil extraction.

²⁷⁶ Landry, "Local metis pioneer," newspaper article, unknown newspaper and unknown date.

²⁷⁷ Mitchell and Prepas, *Atlas of Alberta Lakes*: 331.

²⁷⁸ Ibid.

²⁷⁹ Mike Woodward, "Metis Association of Alberta: The Weekly Report," October 3, 1975, (Glenbow Archives, M4755, file 324): 2.

²⁸⁰ Mitchell and Prepas, *Atlas of Alberta Lakes*: 331.

A map produced by Canada Natural Resources company, an oil and gas exploration company based out of Calgary, Alberta, shows the oil well sites currently surrounding Wolf Lake (See Appendix 10, p. 143). Cleared areas mark the areas, traversing its streams, creeks, rivers and forests, creating disturbances for wild life and the ecosystem. The Cold Lake First Nations traditional land use study and assessment, which encompassed the air range and Wolf Lake, note the impacts of land-use disturbances in the forest: “such as agriculture, seismic activity, urban sprawl and transportation corridors, permanently remove patches or corridors of forests from the mixedwood mosaic.”²⁸¹ These activities are due to resource activities such as oil and gas extraction, forestry, mining, military and recreation. The study further pointed to the impacts of the growing resource extraction in the region: “The emergence of the heavy oil sector in the 1960s, and more recently a bitumen development play, has lead to a dense network of seismic lines, well sites, access roads, processing plants, and pipelines across much of southern half of the CLFN SA [Cold Lake First Nation Study Area] . . .Collectively these energy sector footprints have fragmented the boreal forest landscape . . .creating an abundance of roads and other linear features, but also restricting access by CLFN to traditional lands through the establishment of gates and other obstructions.”²⁸² Economic development that commenced in full in the 1960s, combined with the military bombing and planes, created noise disturbances and cleared areas such as roads and well sites, that would have negative impacts on wildlife habitats. The Wolf Lake area was undoubtedly sought after for its resource potential. These economic activities as well as the bombing range impacted the ability for Métis families to continue making a living in the area. The closure of Wolf Lake, and removal of Métis families from the area, opened the

²⁸¹ ALCES Landscape and Land-use Ltd. “The Cumulative Effects of Historic, Current and Future Land-uses on the Peoples and Landscape of Cold Lake First Nations,” Prepared for Cold Lake First Nation, (June 2012): 2 and 18.

²⁸² ALCES Landscape and Land-use Ltd. “The Cumulative Effects of Historic, Current and Future Land-uses”: 16.

door to government initiatives, ones that were out of sync with Métis traditions and harmed the environment and place where Métis once lived.

In addition to oil extraction, it appears the Wolf Lake area was coveted for timber resources. In a letter dated March 1960 from Joe Dion to supervisor of Métis Rehabilitation Mr. Irwin, Dion indicates concerns by settlers regarding rumours that the Wolf Lake colony would be thrown open.²⁸³ According to Dion, the Wolf Lake residents concerns' were due to the fact that the "Reserved area North of Cold Lake had also taken over by Forestry Branch. Next to go will be Elizabeth, etc. etc."²⁸⁴ In addition, the Wolf Lake settlers told Dion that they were warned against taking our timber, although warned by who is unclear.²⁸⁵ Indeed, by the 1960s and 1970s the Provincial government was interested in the Wolf Lake region for its natural resources. According to aerial photography of the area taken in 1975 (see Appendix 10, p. 143), clear cutting was taking place to the west of Wolf Lake.²⁸⁶ Although it is unclear whether it was government activities or a corporation granted permission to extract timber from the region, it does appear some clear cutting was taking place by 1975. Clear cutting is the removal of every single tree, and is the cheapest method for forestry companies to remove timber, rather than removing timber among standing trees.²⁸⁷ Clear cutting is not simply removing timber on a small scale (like Brady had undertaken with the Wolf Lake timber co-operative) but rather creates large disturbances to the ecosystems, consequently alienating wildlife from the area.

²⁸³ Letter, Joseph Dion to Irwin. March 26, 1960. Glenbow Archives: Joseph Dion fonds, accession M-331-10.

²⁸⁴ Ibid.

²⁸⁵ Ibid.

²⁸⁶ Air Photo Distribution Archive. Aerial photograph, AS1389, 73 L11, 54°40', 8-7-1975.

²⁸⁷ Earthroots, "Clear-Cutting in Ontario." Accessed July 12, 2017.

<http://www.earthroots.org/index.php/clearcutting-item>

Provincial Alberta Government - School Division

In addition to government regulations which impacted the ability of Wolf Lake Métis community members' access to territory and traditional management systems such as resource development and military, other regulations rooted in twentieth century government programs further impeded their ability to make a living with the land and sustain a community rooted in those traditions. During the early years of the establishment of Wolf Lake settlement, the residence had worked to construct a small school near the lake. In December 1941, Brady reported work being done to construct the school, including residents providing the lumber which they had cut and processed. The school was of a great value to the residence, some even relocating from their location further from the Lake to be nearer to the school.²⁸⁸ Brady reports that a Mrs. Francis LePrete has “two boys both of school age. She wished to have a residence erected near the school in order her children might attend school.”²⁸⁹ A school where their children could receive an education while remaining in the community was important to the Métis at Wolf Lake. For example, Alfred Desjardins worked tirelessly at constructing the school house, although he was totally illiterate and unable to speak much English “he feels his lack of education keenly and is determined his children will speak good English.”²⁹⁰ Many Wolf Lake residences understood the importance of an education for their children and worked to ensure it was available to them. By September 2, 1959, Henry F. Irwin, Official Trustee of Metis Rehabilitation Schools, wrote to the Department of Education advising that the Wolf Lake Area had been dissolved.²⁹¹ Mr. Irwin further states that the Métis Rehabilitation branch is interested

²⁸⁸ Brady report, “Wolf Lake Settlement reports – 1941-1943”: 4.

²⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 5.

²⁹⁰ Brady report, “Wolf Lake Settlement reports – 1941-1943”: 4.

²⁹¹ Henry Irwin, Letter to the Department of Education, September 2, 1959. (Provincial Archives of Alberta, GR1984.0037 file 3954).

“in the future administration of this school, and are prepared to give some assistance to improve the main road on the area to assist in meeting transportation problems, should the children who have been attending Wolf Lake School be transported to some other school.”²⁹² Although the government was willing to improve road conditions to transport children out of the area once the Wolf Lake settlement was rescinded, they were not interested in the construction of roads to improve access to the community in order to allow the children to access education in their own community. Government suggested that the Wolf Lake area was too isolated to provide necessary services to the community, however, instead of building a road to abate the isolation, it chose to build a road to remove the children from the area to attend school, rather than provide an adequate school in the Wolf Lake community. Simultaneously, a road would allow for resource development in the area. It appears that road construction was necessitated for accessing the areas resources.

In the face of increasing changes during the mid-twentieth century, one focusing on oil extraction and military presence, the Métis Association of Alberta faced predicaments. In examining James Brady’s daily reports while supervisor at Wolf Lake, he concludes that Wolf Lake, along with Fishing Lake and Elizabeth settlement, ought to be closed: “I am strongly of the opinion that these areas in North Eastern Alberta should be surrendered for a larger area in the Keg River district or other desirable parts of the Lower Peace River territory.”²⁹³ Brady determines that Wolf Lake specifically was unsuitable, that “it is evident after more than 3 years of activity at Wolf Lake there exists no possibility of building a successful Area at the point.”²⁹⁴

²⁹² Ibid.

²⁹³ Brady, “Wolf Lake report, settlement reports – 1941-1943”: 26.

²⁹⁴ Ibid.

Furthermore, his report reveals the decision to halt all activities in the Wolf Lake region: “Attend conference where further interview was held with Dr. Cross [Minister of Health]. Definitive decision was arrived at to suspend development activity at Wolf Lake until complete investigation has been made of Wolf Lake.”²⁹⁵ Such discoveries are evidence of the varied degrees of power struggles at play regarding land. According to the MAA, these areas were inadequate to improve conditions, and could threaten the entire settlement scheme success. As Dr. Cross, Minister of Health, expressed at the MAA convention held August 2, 1942, “... insufficient numbers of Métis people are settling on the Areas . . . this was a disgrace which the Métis should remedy. There was no guarantee that land if not settled could be held indefinitely.”²⁹⁶ The MAA’s approach was to reinforce the settlement areas with more potential, and secure the future of those settlements, and achieve this goal by abandoning settlement areas deemed unsuitable. Brady’s suggestion to close Wolf Lake, as well as Elizabeth and Fishing Lake, was a result of the Association’s attempts to work within a paternalistic government. A paternalistic government system who applied pressure and criticism for what they viewed as a lack of number of Métis peoples residing on the settlements.

At first glance, Brady’s suggestion to close settlements, in combination with his suggestion to halt economic activities at Wolf Lake may appear a betrayal, and abandonment of Métis peoples, and the very settlements he fought to establish. Closer examination reveals a larger threat looming for the lands the MAA worked tirelessly to establish. In fact, Brady and the Convention members were not entirely suggesting to abandon Wolf Lake but rather desired more “suitable” areas to develop another settlement. Most notably an area known as Buffalo Lake “a

²⁹⁵ Ibid., 33.

²⁹⁶ Ibid., 42.

district to the West of Beaver River Area was mentioned as an area to which the settlers of Fishing Lake and Wolf Lake could resettle if they so-desired.”²⁹⁷ Moreover, Brady hoped that Wolf Lake would be turned into a wild life preserve, but does not go into any further details. The reality was that none of the settlement lands were protected, and all could be rescinded, therefore Brady was prepared to make concessions, such as losing “unsuitable” settlements for more ideal locations.

Brady was also frustrated with Wolf Lake residents whom he felt were not committed to improving the area and themselves. The concern for Brady was the Wolf Lake area did not attract Métis peoples interested in undertaking agriculture, cattle raising or timber activities.²⁹⁸ Brady was concerned that the “old mode” lifestyle of hunting and trapping would no longer sustain the Métis people, and thus adopting other economic activities was crucial. His philosophy were rooted in Marxism whereas he believed in a “dual-class analysis of Métis society”.²⁹⁹ As such, Brady believed one class to include nomadic Métis who continued to live by hunting and trapping, and in the other, Métis people descendant of families from Red River, Saskatchewan and St. Paul des Métis.³⁰⁰ In his report Brady notes that “the area is continually beset by the eternal conflict between the old and the new, the primitive and the more advanced agricultural group.”³⁰¹ However, Brady had little concern with those individual who were proficient in their endeavours as full time professional trappers. Rather he appears to have harboured disdain for the newly arrived on the settlements, those he believed were not wetted to the area and

²⁹⁷ Brady report, “Wolf Lake Settlement reports – 1941-1943”: 33.

²⁹⁸ Ibid., 26.

²⁹⁹ For further information on Brady’s dual-class philosophy see Murray Dobbin, *The One-and-a-Half Men: The Story of Jim Brady & Malcolm Norris Metis Patriots of the 20th century*. Vancouver: New Star Books, 1981.

³⁰⁰ Dobbin, *One-and-a-Half-Men*: 91.

³⁰¹ Brady report, “Wolf Lake Settlement reports – 1941-1943”: 26.

improving the settlement community, but rather were seeking a refuge. For example, Joe Dion indicated in a letter dated September 26, 1958, that while visiting Wolf Lake there were two families from Cold Lake camped near the school, a Mr. August Cardinal and his brother-in-law Albert Piché. According to Dion these men along with their large families, with both having school aged children, came to Wolf Lake with the intention of settling, as they told him that Cold Lake was “getting rid of the half-breeds.”³⁰² Brady’s frustrations were not simply with the Métis at Wolf Lake, but rather with the larger controlling provincial government, which had hampered the MAA’s attempt to self-govern the settlements.

Brady and the MAA’s desire to close Wolf Lake reveals why specific settlements were chosen by the MAA. According to Brady, areas should have been chosen for their potential for agriculture. Brady’s survey of the Wolf Lake area for its agricultural potential reported that “the soil however is gravel sub soil and in my opinion has not a very high agricultural value.”³⁰³ Brady also examined other areas like the one at Buffalo Lake, which was not examined for its existing Métis population but rather for its land quality. Seeing that original areas of Elizabeth, Fishing Lake and Wolf Lake were no longer deemed adequate areas for successful development, leads me to believe that they were initial chosen in 1938 for their existing Métis communities. In fact, according to Adrian Hope, the Wolf Lake area was selected “at the request and choosing of the Alberta Metis themselves, who wanted to have all Metis trappers in the north-east in one place. Wolf Lake was their choice because it was close to the Mets trapping grounds on one hand, and close to schools and other amenities of settled country on the others.”³⁰⁴ Furthermore,

³⁰² Letter Joseph Dion to H.F. Irwin. September 26, 1958. Glenbow Archives, Joseph Dion fonds, M-331-9.

³⁰³ Brady report, “Wolf Lake Settlements Reports – 1941-1943”: 40.

³⁰⁴ Chipeniuk, *Lakes of the Lac La Biche District*: 151.

according to Catherine Bell, the MAA's early vision was to select land for a wide spectrum of Métis people undertaking a variety of economic activities, such as those living the traditional life of hunting and trapping, and others desire to take up agriculture.³⁰⁵ Control of day to day life on the settlements fell under the Bureau of Relief which consequently moved away from the MAA's vision of land for traditional pursuits, to land bases suitable for agriculture, and with sufficient timber.³⁰⁶ Wolf Lake was originally chosen as a settlement since Métis people had traditionally sustained themselves in the area and it supported the traditional life of hunting and trapping.³⁰⁷ These were areas where Métis families had developed relations with the land, and thus Metis trapping grounds. Nonetheless, in requesting Wolf Lake be closed the MAA did not or perhaps could not acknowledge that Wolf Lake was an important place to Métis families and community. That this place was a Métis community where some families resided since the 19th century seemed to matter not. In April 1942, Brady noted in his daily report: "It is evident that the means of livelihood furnished by trapping and hunting will not last for ever. In the regions populated by Métis it is apparent that the next generation will no longer have access to these resources and stark necessity will force them to change their methods of livelihood."³⁰⁸ To combat these, Brady attempted to introduce new economic activities such as co-operatives. As noted previously, Brady had attempted to establish a timber co-operative at Wolf Lake for the benefit of the residents. For the MAA and Brady, the settlements lands had to yield a new way of life for Métis peoples.

³⁰⁵ Catherine Bell and the Metis Settlements Appeal Tribunal, *Contemporary Metis Justice: The Settlement Way*, (Saskatoon: Native Law Centre, University of Saskatchewan, 1999): 14 and 20.

³⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 20.

³⁰⁷ For more discussion on this point see: Catherine Bell and the Metis Settlements Appeal Tribunal, *Contemporary Metis Justice: The Settlement Way*, *Ibid.*

³⁰⁸ Brady report, "Wolf Lake Settlement reports – 1941-1943": 33.

Less known is the reaction of Wolf Lake members to the possibility of closing the settlement. However, bits of information gleaned from the record give a sense that a real concern existed at the possibility of losing their Wolf Lake homes. Although Brady suggests that some were open to the idea of relocating, it appears others were not.³⁰⁹ As early as 1942 rumours circulated regarding the closure of Wolf Lake, but also the fear that all the settlements were to be rescinded. In 1942, Brady noted hostility by non-Aboriginal peoples around Wolf Lake toward the settlement, and rumours regarding its possible closure. Brady noted that a Fred Hattebuhr who was not Métis was “extremely hostile and critical toward the Area and enquired as to the veracity of local rumours that the Area is to be abolished.”³¹⁰ At a Wolf Lake board meeting, Brady noted that the “principal concern was the recent rumour that the administration intended to close the Wolf Lake Area. This rumor was fortified by the assertion made by the supervisor that the Area was to be closed and the Government would pull down the house when he left.”³¹¹ The council meeting also brought attention to rumours that other settlements such as Fishing Lake and those in the North East were to close as well. To these increasing concerns, Brady reassured the council “...that the present Government had no intention of closing any Metis Areas and that such reports are the work of rumour mongers and mischief makers.”³¹² A letter from Joseph Dion, first President of the MAA, to H. F. Irwin, supervisor of the government Métis Rehabilitation Branch, in 1958 Dion met with Wolf Lake members and that “. . .most in their cups and wanted to trash out everything... They wish to retain Wolf Lake area for their homes

³⁰⁹ Brady Report, “Wolf Lake Settlements Reports – 1941-1943”: 39 and 40.

³¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 35.

³¹¹ *Ibid.*, 50.

³¹² *Ibid.*

and settlement.”³¹³ Again in March 1960, Joseph Dion wrote to Irwin informing him that: “a rumour, creating unrest among settlers, that Wolf Lake colony has or is being thrown open.”³¹⁴

The Wolf Lake residents were aware of the closing of Cold Lake, and according to Dion’s letter the closed settlement was taken over by the Forestry Branch. They also heard the rumour from the “whites,” who had also been hearing the stories around possible closure.³¹⁵ According to Dion as early as the 1950s, he had been trying to quell feelings that Wolf Lake was “drifting to another St. Paul des Métis disaster.”³¹⁶ On March 28, 1960, in response to Dion’s concerns, Supervisor Irwin informed him that as of February 10th Wolf Lake and Cold Lake were disestablished by Order in Council and that the lands were returned to the Department of Lands and Forests.³¹⁷ This came over six weeks after the settlement had already been rescinded. According to Irwin, Wolf Lake was not a “rehabilitation area in the true sense” as timber resources were depleted, and the land was not suitable for agriculture. The old Ewing Commission mentality continued to inform the decisions of the government in that settlements’ support a new mode of life based on agriculture.

Furthermore, it is evident that by 1960 the government appointed supervisor of Métis Rehabilitation Branch maintained control and power of the future of the settlements. There is no indication that the Branch attempted to consult with the MAA regarding the closure of the settlement. However, the MAA did not completely neglect to act as one of the settlements they

³¹³ Letter Joe Dion to H.F. Irwin. September 26, 1958. Glenbow Archives: Joseph Dion fonds, accession M331-9.

³¹⁴ Letter Joe Dion to H.F. Irwin. March 26, 1960. Glenbow Archives: Joseph Dion fonds, accession M-331-10.

³¹⁵ Ibid.

³¹⁶ Ibid.

³¹⁷ Letter Henry F. Irwin to Joe Dion. March 28, 1960. Glenbow Archives: Joseph Dion fonds, accession M-331-10.

fought to establish was closed. In the early 1960s, the MAA began its climb from irrelevancy, with the election of Adrian Hope as its new president. In 1960, with knowledge that the government closed Wolf Lake and Cold Lake unilaterally, the MAA with Hope now at the helm attempted to protest these actions.³¹⁸ The protest of the closure was blocked by an overlooked detail; according to the provincial government, the MAA had never been registered, and thus did not exist in the eye of the state. Bureaucratic oversights shattered the MAA's ability to protest the closure. According to Chipeniuk, Adrien Hope believed the government had coerced the Métis into signing the forms declaring that they agreed to leave, and many were not aware of what they were signing.³¹⁹ The Métis Association of Alberta's battle to become the self-governing body of the settlements had faltered from the start, as the government increasingly controlled settlements lands. As such, the MAA had no real role in governing the settlements, and the MAA fell into a dormant state. As early as 1942, a fear existed among the Métis on settlements that the lands were not secured and could be rescinded by the government. In addition, these rumours were circulated and likely bolstered by hostile non-Aboriginal peoples in the area who wanted access to the settlement area. With no representation, the Wolf Lake Métis settlements was closed.

The politics of land, and the subsequent power struggles amongst the different participants, bled over onto the Wolf Lake Métis community and functioned to disinherit them from their territory. For local Métis communities, politics of land are multidimensional, and exercised through daily activities based on reciprocity with the land, and all living beings. At

³¹⁸ Joe Sawchuk, *The Dynamics of Alberta Politics: The Alberta Métis Experience*, (Saskatoon: Purich Pub, 1998): 57.

³¹⁹ Chipeniuk, *Lakes of the Lac La Biche District*: 151.

Wolf Lake, these relations of reciprocity were materialized through hunting and trapping practices, growing gardens, fishing, visiting, language, and kinship. Métis communities such as Wolf Lake continued to live along what Métis scholar Adam Gaudry calls a “Métis diplomatic tradition” which was developed in the nineteenth century: “[t]his Indigenous diplomatic universe possessed a common, international political language, based on the symbolism of kinship, which determined how families, bands, and nations were to behave towards one another. It was through this system, too, that non-Indigenous outsiders were able to situate themselves in the prairie political universe, using Indigenous protocols and traditions to do so.”³²⁰ The evidence shows that the local Wolf Lake Métis community lived along these political principles in their trapping and hunting traditions, as well as kinship connections until its disestablishment in 1960.

Colonial understanding of place fail to recognize the embodiment of space for Indigenous peoples. Their politics are a reflection of their embodiment of land, rooted in their kinship, and through understanding of territory. It appears some Wolf Lake families stayed in the area, while others relocated to other settlements such as Buffalo Lake, and Kikino, while others moved to the Cold Lake area.³²¹ Their refusal to leave can be understood as resistance to the external alien politics of land, those imposed by governments, and to some extent those of the Métis Association of Alberta. Nonetheless, consideration ought to be given to the power struggle that the Métis Association was facing at this time. As mentioned above, Dr. Cross informed the MAA convention that there was no guarantee that the lands could be held indefinitely. Although Brady and the MAA supported the relocation of Métis people from Wolf Lake, their intentions were different than those of the government. They were attempting to work within a paternalistic

³²⁰ Gaudry, “Kaa-tipeyimishoyaahk - ‘We are those who own ourselves’”: 135.

³²¹ Chipeniuk, *Lakes of the Lac La Biche District*: 151.

government system to first establish the settlements, but by 1940, fighting to protect Métis settlements. The MAA's position regarding land was that it ought to be able to improve Métis conditions, not only for the present, but also for the next generations. Their suggestions to close Wolf Lake was from their understanding of land; land as an essential element to improving Métis conditions. Although the MAA's plan to move families from Wolf Lake never fully materialized, that is they never orchestrated transportation of all families, many families did leave the area due to the MAA's suggestion to do so. Furthermore, the lack of investment in the area, such as the MAA's elimination of lumber activities, removed any opportunity of building a successful area. As a result, the MAA's suggestion for residents at Wolf Lake to relocate from the area, combined with the MAA abandoning existing economic activities and any future activities, reduced the number of Wolf Lake inhabitants and stagnated the area's future. As a result, the inhabitants who remained at Wolf Lake after the 1940s became increasingly vulnerable to encroachment by interested parties in the Wolf Lake area. Although the MAA faced pressure to increase the number of Métis on settlements, their actions nonetheless crippled the Wolf Lake area, and created the conditions for the governments to effortlessly grasp the area in 1960.

Politics over land are not one dimensional but are multi-faceted and layered. Therefore government power not only works directly onto the Métis people, but at this time through Métis organizations like the MAA. The MAA's struggle with the government was to ensure the settlements lands were secured for future generations, but this meant concessions were made, such as suggesting relocating Wolf Lake members to a more promising settlement, and abandoning co-operative timber activities. The nuanced politics of land created entanglements in the Métis web of connectivity and relationality. These factors in combination with restrictive

trapping regulations, and the Primrose Air Weapons Range, created barriers to maintaining relations with the land and traditions at Wolf Lake.

Chapter 6 – Concluding Reflections

When I started the research I was drawn to the displacement of Wolf Lake, and to understanding the impacts of displacement on individuals and community. As I progressed in the research, I

realized that examining only the displacement failed to encapsulate the importance of land and the valuable traditions fostered with the land. My initial approach was rooted in deficit, and as set up by Bagele Chilisa it is important to challenge deficit theorizing and interpretation, to create counter narratives that see the past differently.³²² Furthermore, according to Linda Tuhiwai Smith as quoted in Bagele, decolonizing requires first “destroying what has wrongly been written - for instance, interrogating distortions of people’s life experiences, negative labeling, deficit theorizing, genetically deficient or culturally deficient models that pathologized the colonized Other - and retelling the stories of the past and envisioning the future. These strategies facilitate the process of recovery and discovery.”³²³ My research inquiry shifted from a deficit model to explore the importance of Métis territoriality and place, rooted in Métis traditions, politics, economic and social traditions. I did so by using an archival research methodology, one rooted in the importance of re-membering, but also informed by addressing whiteness. I do both by first countering colonial imposed systems that subjugate and erode Métis way of life, and finally by exploring and presenting the density of Indigenous knowledge, through its annual cycles based on understanding and relations to the land. Through the research I also came to better understand my own sense of belonging. I began to re-member myself, the place I grew up along the banks of the South Saskatchewan River, the importance of my ancestors’ connection to that place, and the history and stories that had been rendered invisible, such as those of my ancestor Maxime Lépine. It allowed me to also be more critical of settler society’s influences on ensuring I forget my history and story.

³²² Bagele Chilisa, *Indigenous Research Methodologies*, (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: SAGE Publications, 2012): 60.

³²³ Linda Tuhiwai Smith quoted in Bagele Chilisa, *Indigenous Research Methodologies*: 16.

Archives allowed mapping the land use patterns, and daily life of Métis people at Wolf Lake. It rendered the community visible with tangible archival findings, such as maps, photographs and records written by Métis people (i.e. our intellectual history – writings by James Brady, and Joseph Dion). In doing so, I learned the value of archives to Indigenous studies, since archives can function to reveal the density of Indigenous knowledge systems. Archives can also uncover Indigenous agency and action. It can also challenge the notion that archives are “bare” spaces where Indigenous histories are presented as “vanished Indians” and communities as simple and disappearing. In doing so, it thus challenges the whiteness of the archives. By utilizing archives the research contributes to filling the literature gap on the closure of the Wolf Lake settlement, as well as a better understanding of why the settlement lands were chosen. The research further contributes to re-instating the importance of land and sense of place for Métis peoples in relation to the settlements.

In chapter three by examining the daily life at Wolf Lake, I learned that when Wolf Lake was established as a settlement in 1938 as a result of the Ewing Commission it already had been an existing Métis community. In fact, it was due to the community’s existence that it was requested (by the residents) to be set aside as a settlement. Wolf Lake was not disconnected from the larger web of Métis communities, but rather was associated via water ways (Beaver River) and well known trails. Marriages and relations remained connected by seasonally occupying Wolf Lake for winters, or for fishing. Kinship also played a role in ensuring family and friends were cared for. Seasonal activities supported these kinship networks, through visiting. These networks created a safety net for the Wolf Lake community. As such, Wolf Lake was a community that had fostered relations with the land, and was a significant place for Métis

peoples throughout the Beaver River area. Wolf Lake exemplifies the interwoven connection Métis people have to specific places, and thus eroding past scholarship that reduced our traditions to nomadic, and too mobile to have established territory. In examining the daily lives of Wolf Lake members prior to its displacement, I understand the importance of Métis places, and can only imagine the loss of those places.

Chapter four unravels the displacement of Métis communities as part of a larger fabric of twentieth-century resource development policies, and Cold War initiatives. In the changing climate that was Canada and the Province of Alberta in the 1950s and 1960s, Wolf Lake Métis had a narrow chance of holding onto its land. Even when those lands had already been set aside as a provincially legislated settlement, it could all still be taking away and in fact was. The closure of Wolf Lake signalled the arrival of a new colonial order in Canada, one that continued to follow the same recipe to disinherit Indigenous peoples as prairie settlement had in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. However this time it was for oil potential and military expansion. As governments remained devoted to the colonial understanding of land as “thing”, the dispossession of Indigenous peoples continued. Based on the archival evidence available it is clear that the government was keen to acquire the lands in and around Wolf Lake. However, whatever the multiple reasoning for closing Wolf Lake are, this thesis demonstrates that Métis people were not nomadic, aimlessly wandering as much of the early Métis studies literature concluded. That rather Métis people had developed long standing relationships with places, first by wintering, as key seasonal sites for harvesting resources, and increasingly as permanent community. This relationality with the land fostered all aspects of Métis traditions, such as trapping, principles of visiting and caring for the community. These traditions continue to exist

today, as does our relationship to the land. The research reveals the systems, policies and prevalent government mentalities that functioned to disinherit Métis peoples from the place where they had fostered a Métis way of life.

Government hunting and trapping regulations further impeded Wolf Lake Métis peoples' ability to continue their seasonal activities, and manage their environment as they had always done. These Aboriginal systems were developed through long term relationships with the land. Not only did the gaming regulations disregard the sophisticated Aboriginal management traditions, but they also increasingly shrunk Indigenous peoples hunting and trapping areas and their economic future. In doing so, these regulations eroded Indigenous peoples' traditions, ones established based on diplomatic traditions and management strategies informed by their environment. These regulations hampered Indigenous peoples economic potential, financial restraints due to the fee requirements, and eroded kinship networks and traditional territory management systems.

With the exception of Isadore Desjarlais who we know stayed at Wolf Lake after its closure, it remains unclear where the other Wolf Lake families went.³²⁴ According to Cora Weber-Pillwax in an interview she conducted with the former Wolf Lake member: “The old man was the head of the only family that refused to move from their home. He lived there up until his death two years ago. . . His son related the pain and loss that he had felt at watching his friends and their families drive away or be driven away from their homes. He remembered and described growing up with a community of empty houses and memories of a thriving and busy community,

³²⁴ Landry, “Local metis pioneer,” newspaper article, unknown newspaper and unknown date.

filled with children, families, and animals.”³²⁵ Was there a formal notice and process to removing families from the area? Weber-Pillwax further reiterates that: “The people telling the story were the people who were loaded up into the backs of trucks and wagons and physically hauled away to other towns and areas.”³²⁶ Rendering the Wolf Lake displacement visible allows moving forward to document the experience of the former residents. It would require first locating and then interviewing former Wolf Lake residents. Interviews would allow the Wolf Lake members to share their experience of displacement. To better understand their connection to Wolf Lake, and whether they continue to return today.

While it seems unlikely that the Métis will ever have the Wolf Lake lands re-instated, considering the vast amount of oil and gas revenues, it remains vital to recognize the area as an important Métis community and place. The story of Wolf Lake can also serve as an example of the impacts of government action on Métis peoples and community. It should function as a starting point to ensure that not only Métis communities throughout Canada, but Indigenous communities more broadly, do not continue to suffer the burden of government resource extraction or military expansion. In the post second-world war period, Métis peoples’ and communities’ relationship with the land and places were ultimately compromised due to Canadian and Provincial government’s rush to expand industry and resource extraction. Thrush views the grounding of ghosts, specific histories of place, as a form of resurrection of Indigenous peoples and places.³²⁷ In grounding the history of Wolf Lake and its community it is possible to

³²⁵ Weber-Pillwax, “Indigenous Researchers and Indigenous Research Methods”: 84 and 85.

³²⁶ *Ibid.*, 84.

³²⁷ Thrush, “Hauntings as Histories”: 76.

resurrect the importance and significance of Métis territoriality, to not forget these places, and reclaim “concrete details of a new narrative of Indigenous history.”³²⁸

³²⁸ Thrush, “Hauntings as Histories”: 76-77.

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Photograph Marion Larivière at Wolf Lake 1942. Glenbow Archives PA-2218-191.

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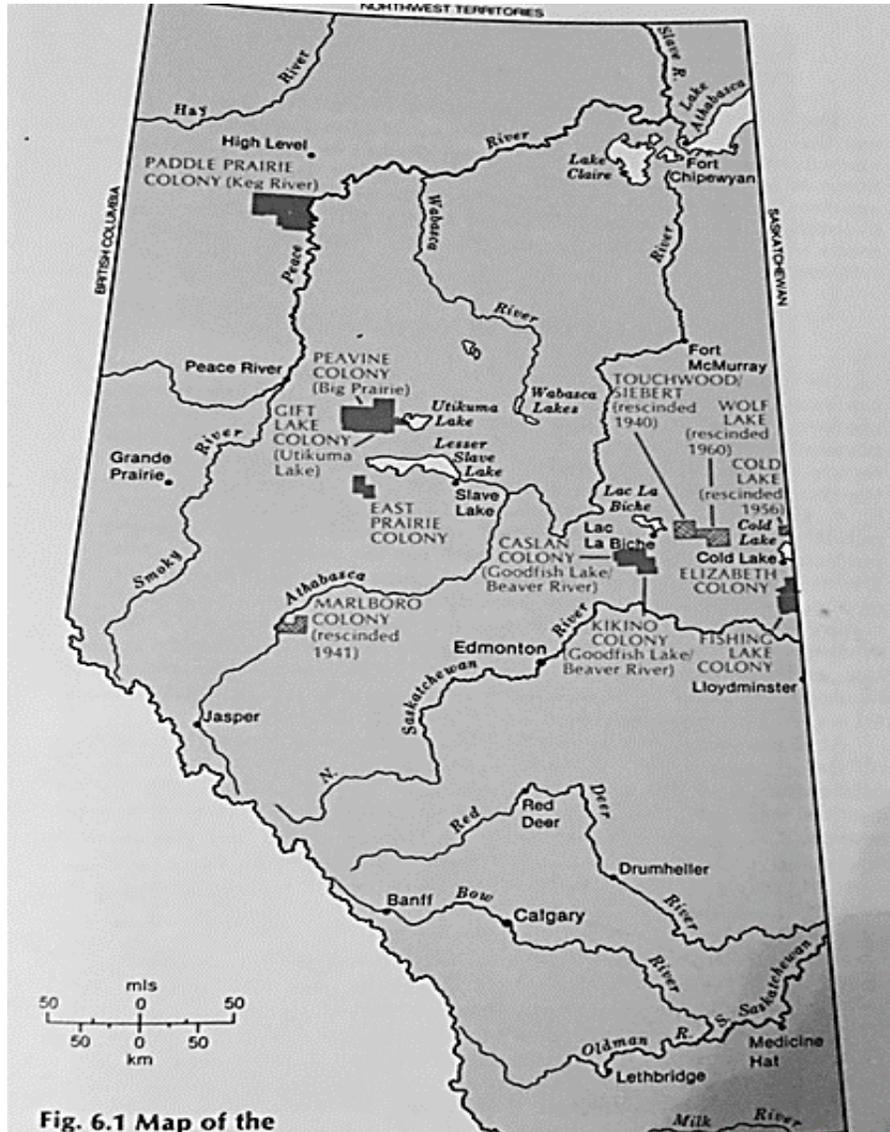
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Appendices

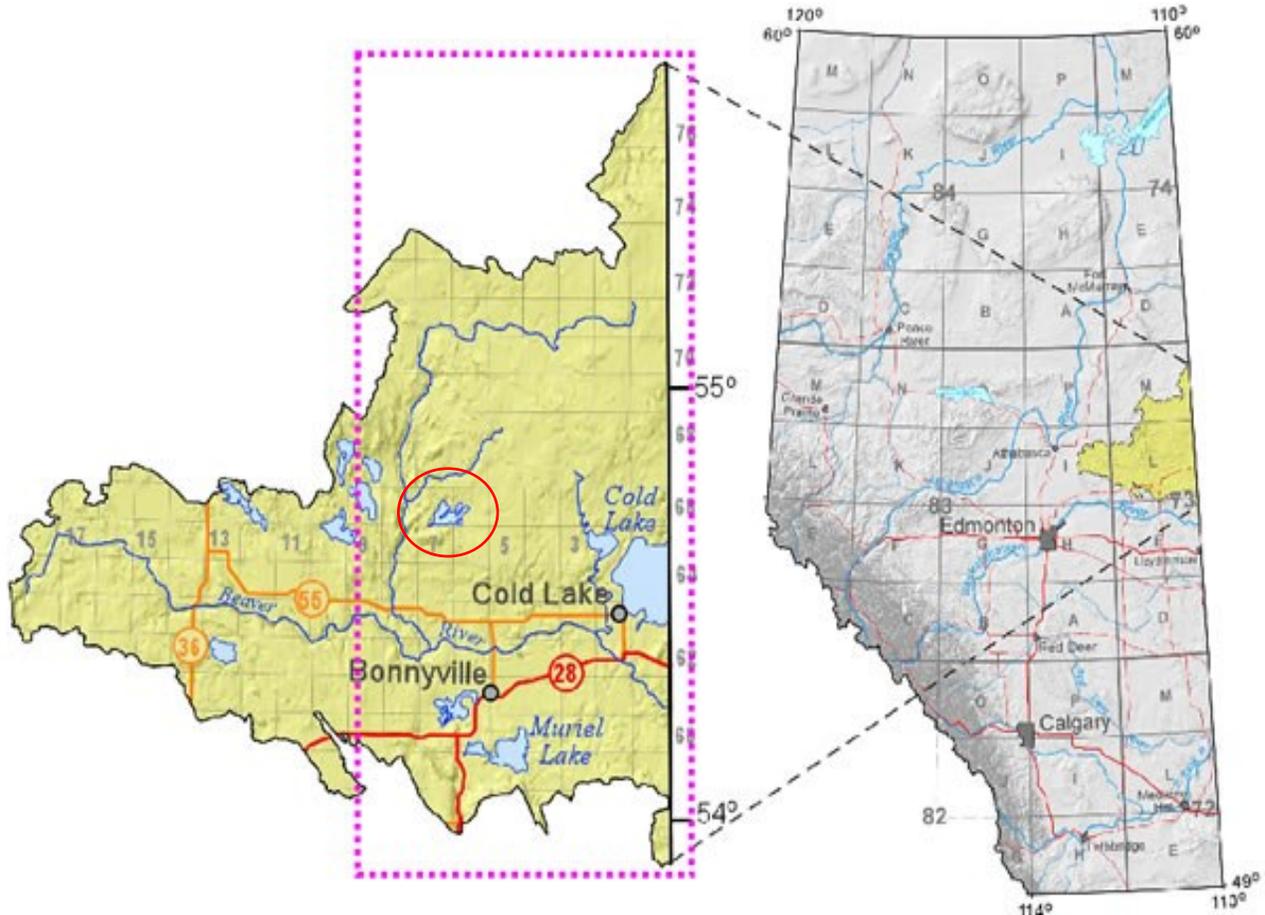
Appendix 1: Alberta Métis Settlements Map



Joe Sawchuk, Patricia Sawchuk, and Theresa Ferguson. *Metis Land Rights in Alberta: A Political History*. Edmonton: Metis Association of Alberta, 1981.

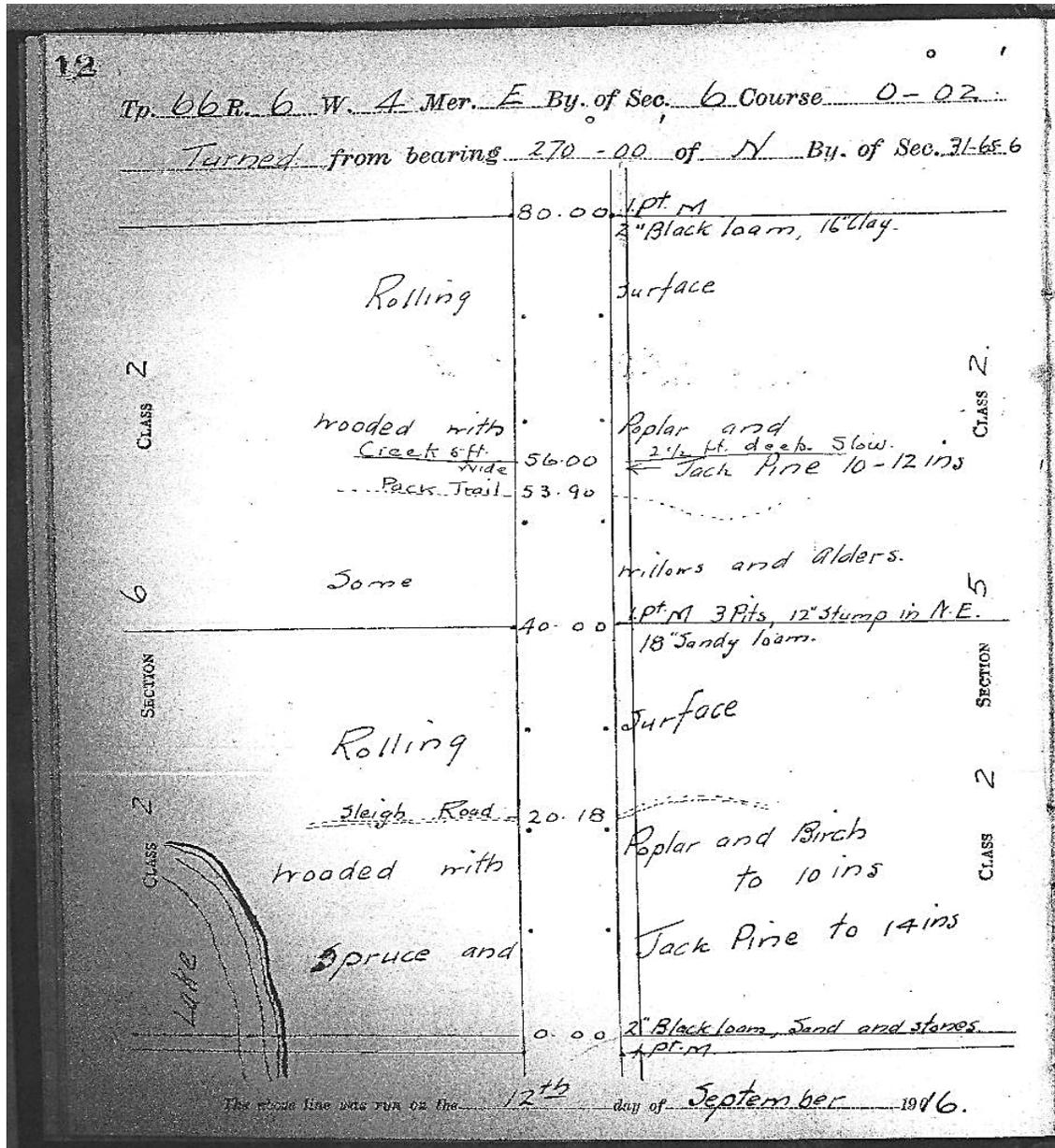
Appendix 2: Alberta Beaver River Basin Region

Note: Wolf Lake is circled on the map.



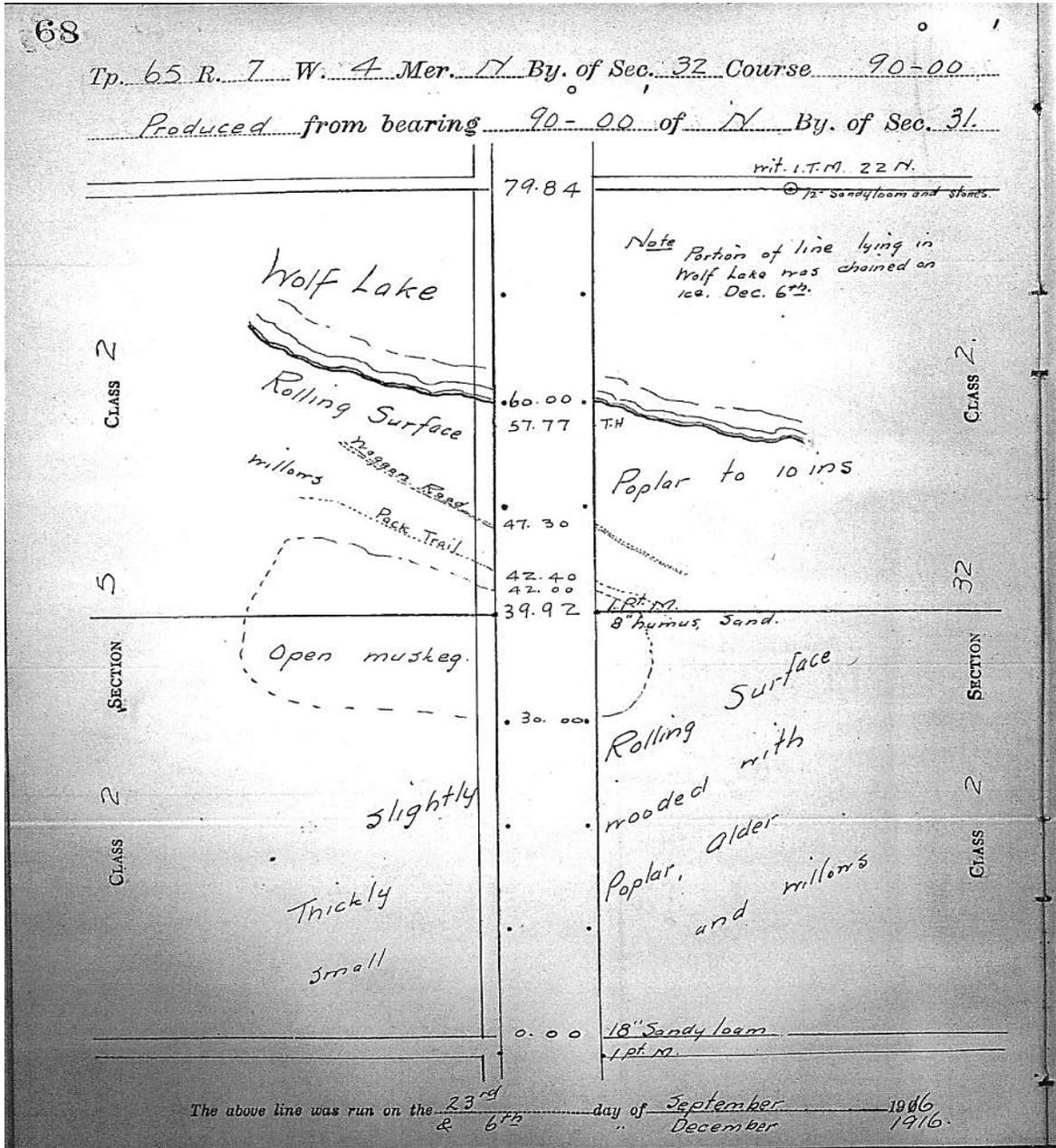
Alberta Environment and Parks. "Cold Lake – Beaver River Water Management Plan Area."
<http://aep.alberta.ca/water/programs-and-services/river-management-frameworks/cold-lake-beaver-river-water-management-plan/planning-area.aspx>

Appendix 3: Fred Seibert Survey Maps of Wolf Lake – Sleigh Road (1916)



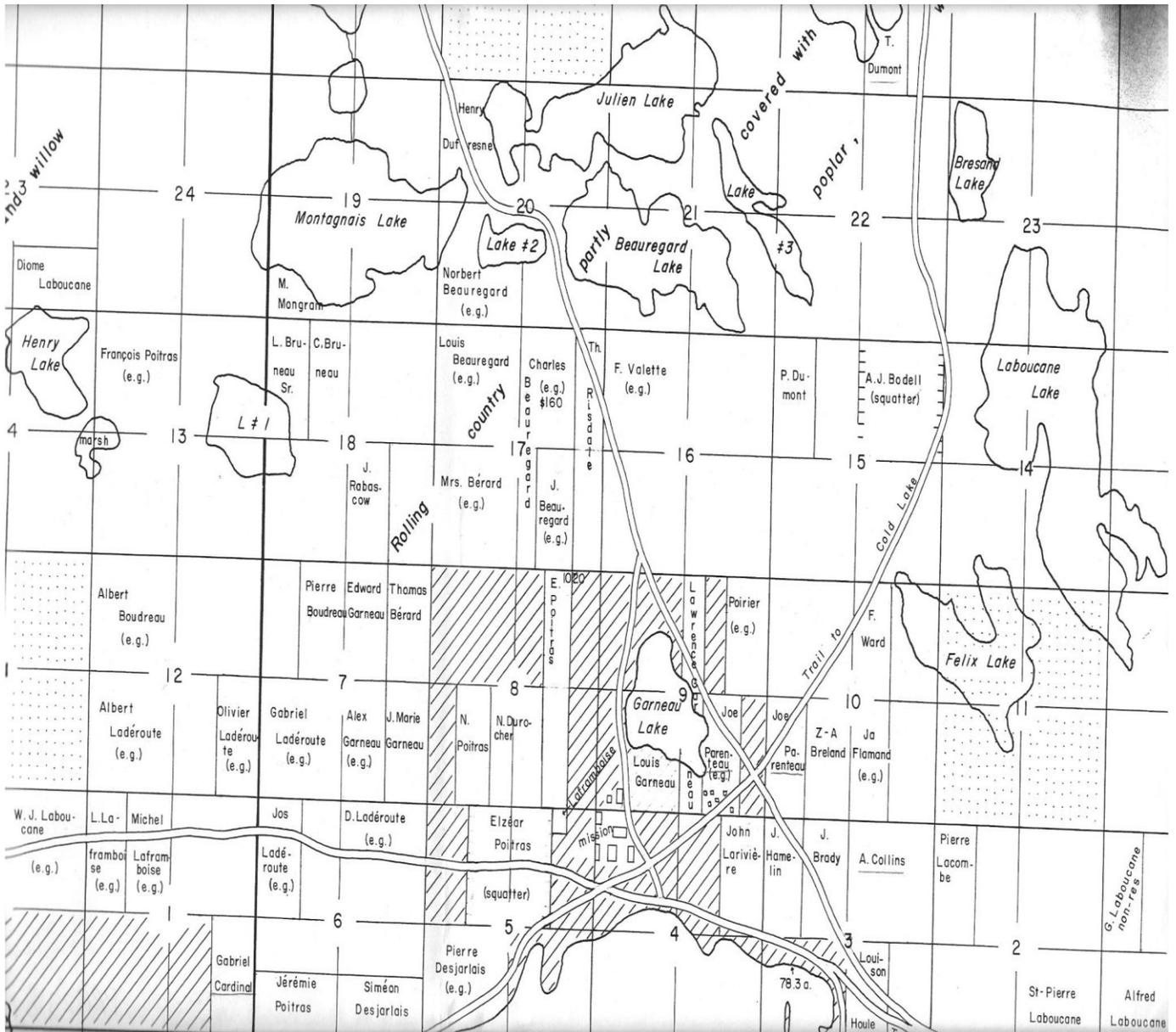
Fred V. Seibert, "Survey Report," September 1916. Provincial Archives of Alberta, accession 83.376, file no 4777a.

Appendix 4: Fred Seibert Survey Maps of Wolf Lake – Trails (1916)



Fred V. Seibert, "Survey Report," September 1916. Provincial Archives of Alberta, accession 83.376, file no 4777a.

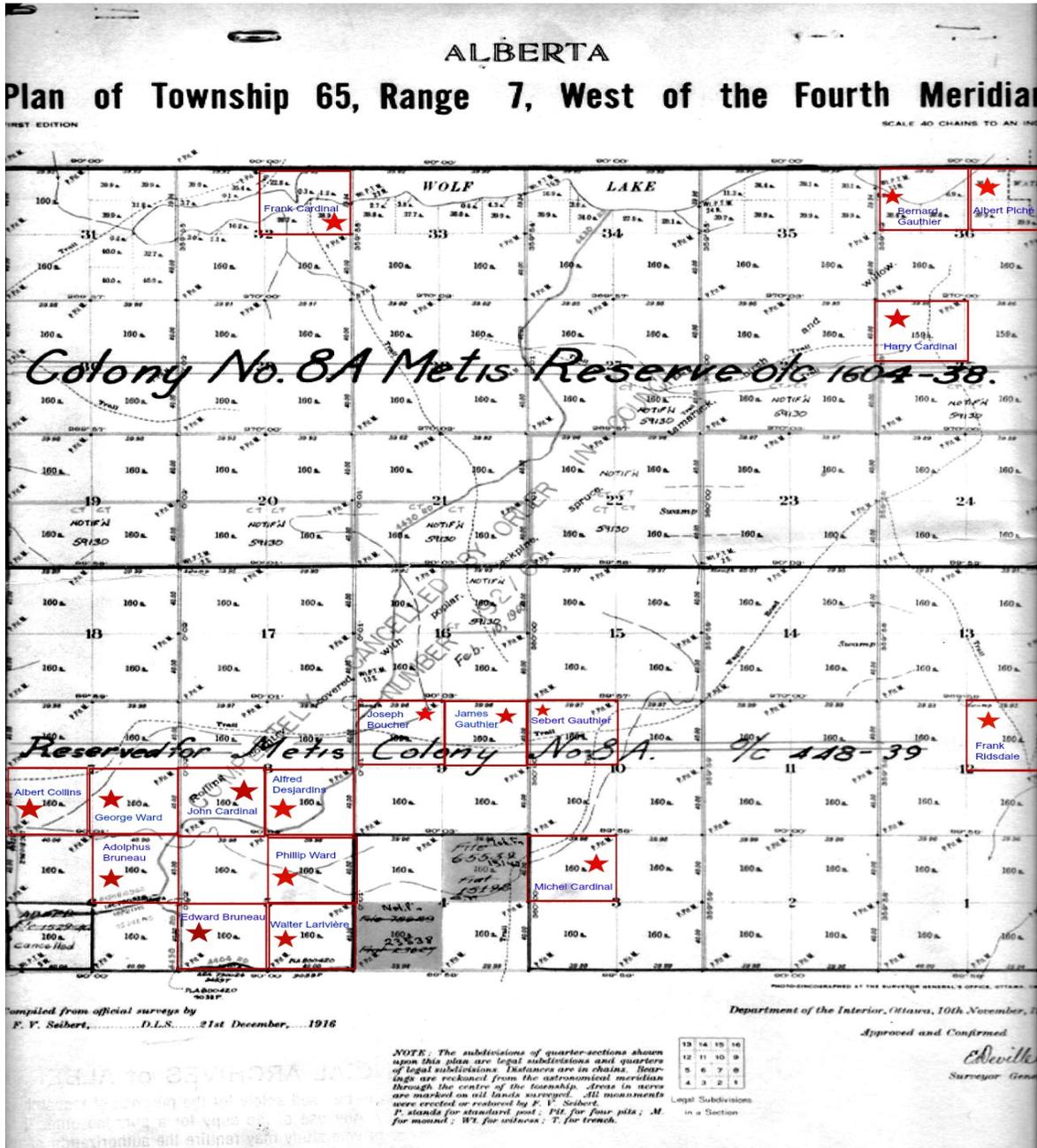
Appendix 5: St. Paul des Métis families



Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate. Cartographie St. Paul des Métis, Provincial Archives of Alberta, Oblates Fonds, accession PR1973.0399/ 73.

Appendix 6: Locations of Métis families at Wolf Lake

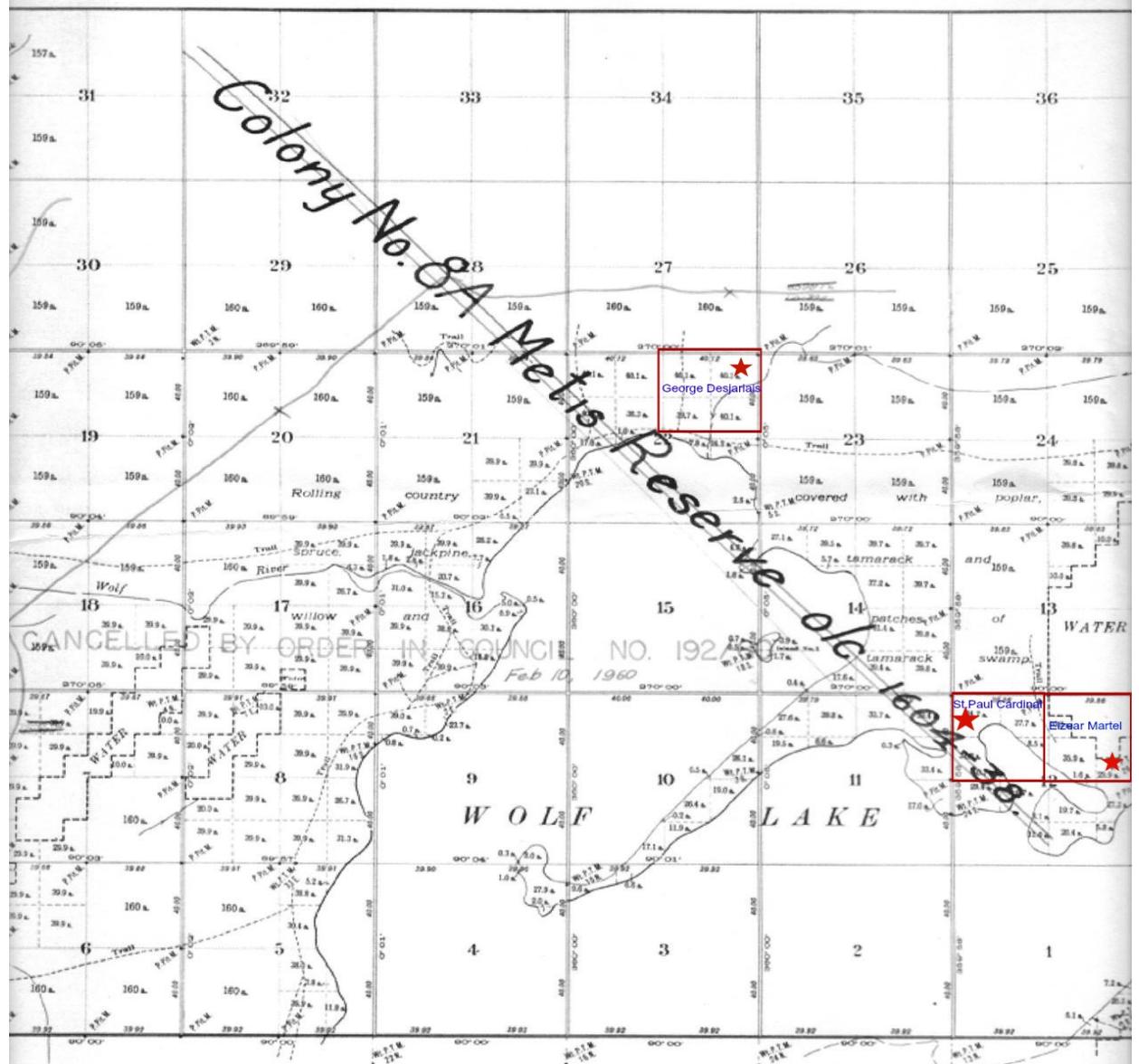
Note Families from St. Paul des Métis (see appendix 5) such as the Ward, Cardinal, Bruneau, and Larivière's all settled near one another at Wolf Lake (lower left corner of map).



Fred V. Seibert "Plan of Township 65, Range 7, West of the Fourth Meridian." December 23, 1916. Provincial Archives of Alberta, accession GR2004.214, file 471e.

ALBERTA
 Plan of Township 66, Range 7, West of the Fourth Meridian

1ST EDITION SCALE 40 CHAINS TO AN INCH



Compiled from official surveys by
 V. Seibert, D.L.S., 23rd December, 1916

PHOTO-ENGRAVED AT THE SURVEYOR GENERAL'S OFFICE, OTTAWA, CAN.
 Department of the Interior, Ottawa, 26th November, 1916

NOTE. The subdivisions of quarter-sections shown upon this plan are legal subdivisions and quarters of legal subdivisions. Distances are in chains. Bearings are reckoned from the astronomical meridian through the centre of the township. Areas in acres are marked on all lands surveyed. All monuments were erected by F. V. Seibert.
 P. stands for standard post; P.L. for four pits; M. for mound; W. for witness; T. for trench.

13	14	15	16
12	11	10	9
8	7	6	5
4	3	2	1

Legal Subdivisions
 in a Section

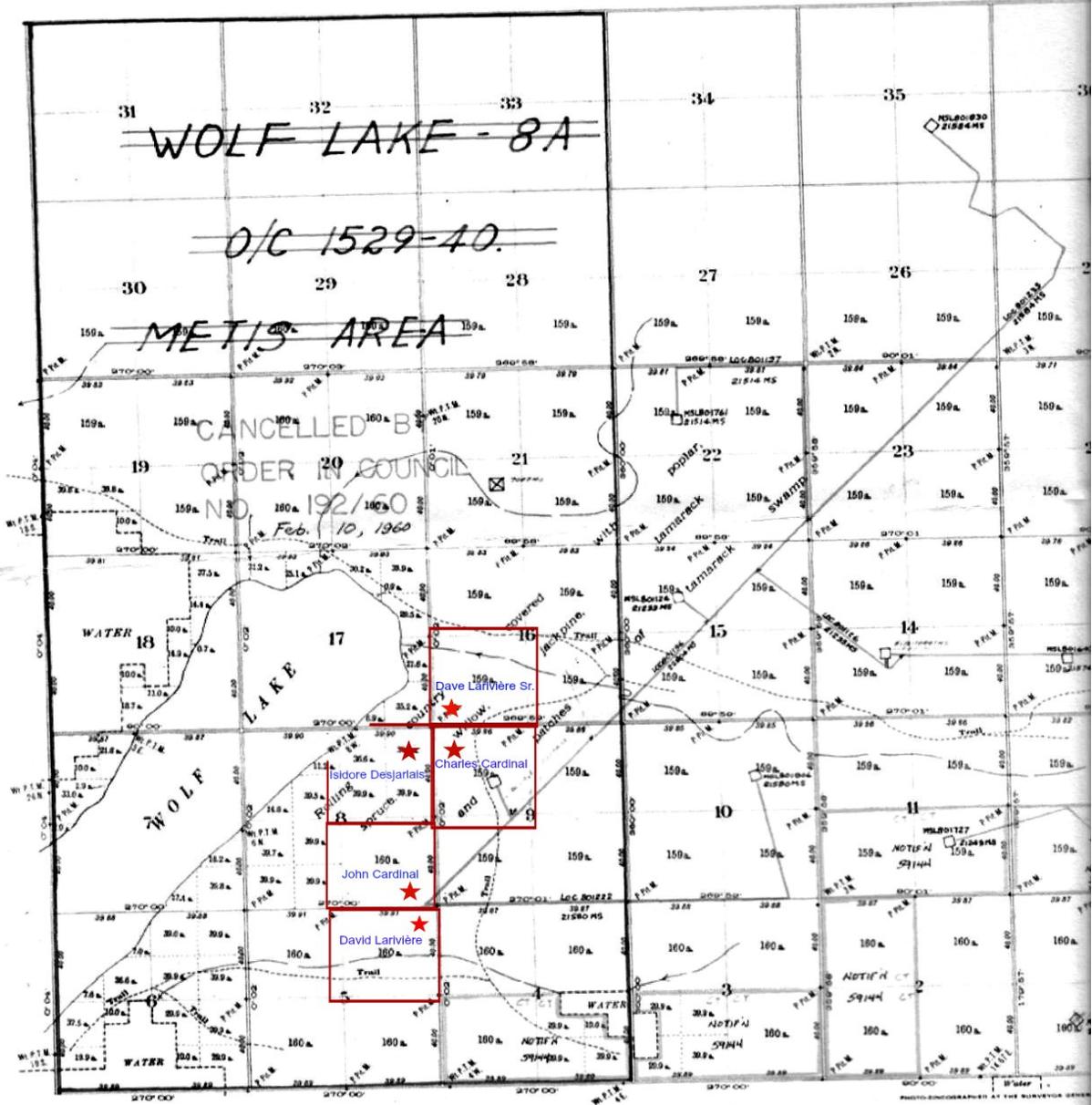
Approved and Confirmed
 E. Deville
 Surveyor General

Fred V. Seibert. "Plan of Township 66, Range 7, West of the Fourth Meridian." December 23, 1916. Provincial Archives of Alberta, accession GR2004.214, file 472d.

Plan of Township 66, Range 6, West of the Fourth Meridian

FIRST EDITION

SCALE 40 CHAINS



Compiled from official surveys by
 M. W. Hopkins, D.L.S. 30th December, 1910.
 F. V. Seibert, D.L.S. 23rd December, 1916

NOTE: The subdivisions of quarter-sections shown upon this plan are legal subdivisions and quarters of legal subdivisions. Distances are in chains. Bearings are reckoned from the astronomical meridian through the centre of the township. Areas in acres are marked on all lands surveyed. The name at a monument is that of the surveyor who erected the monument. All monuments not so designated were erected or restored by F. V. Seibert. P. stands for standard post; I for old pattern iron post; Pt. for four pits; M. for mound; Wt. for witness; T. for trench; Wo. for wooden post.

13	14	15	16
12	11	10	9
8	7	6	5
4	3	2	1

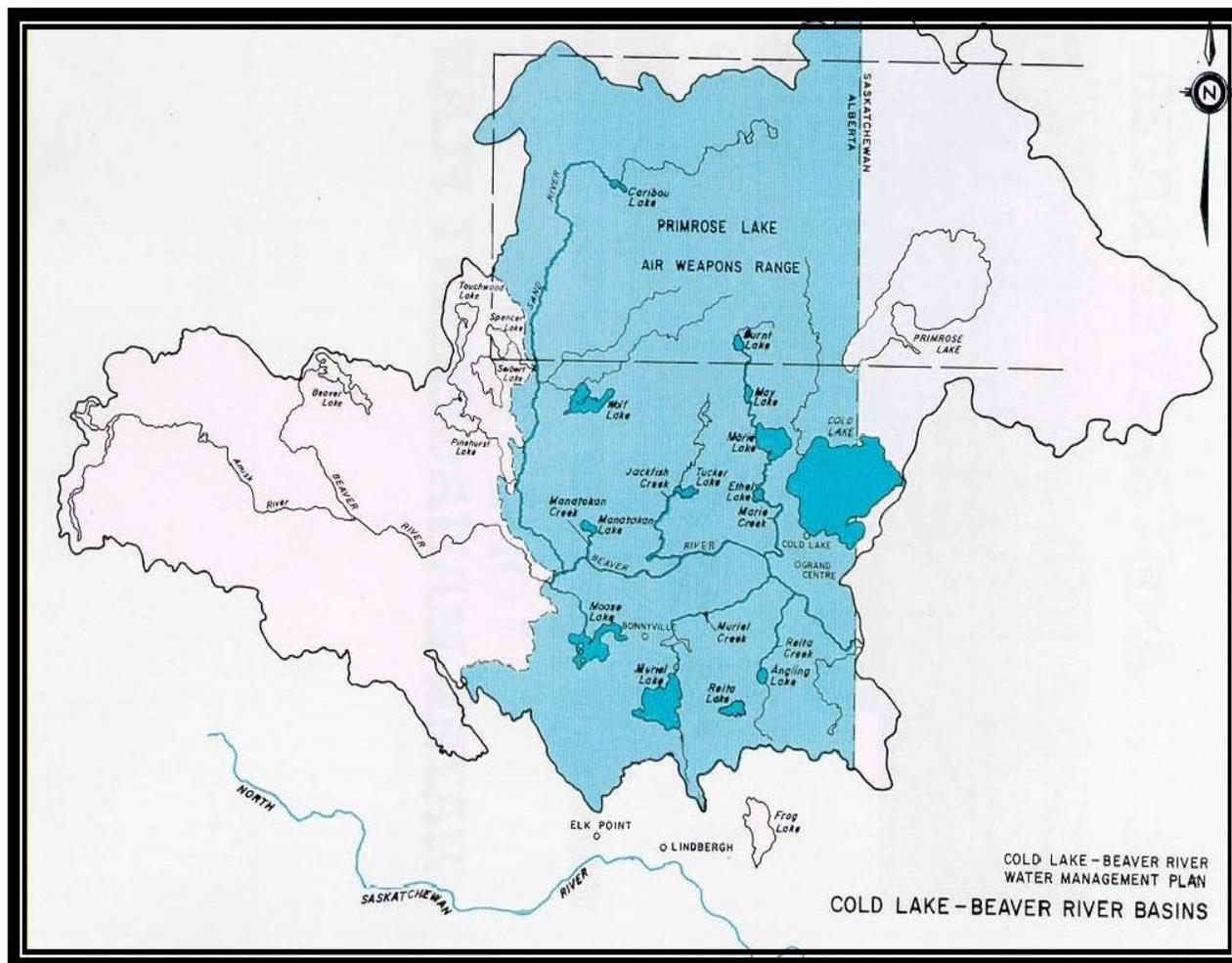
Legal Subdivisions in a Section

Department of the Interior, Ottawa, 2

Approved and

Seibert, Fred V. "Plan of Township 66, Range 6, West of the Fourth Meridian." December 21, 1916. Provincial Archives of Alberta, accession GR2004.214, file 396f.

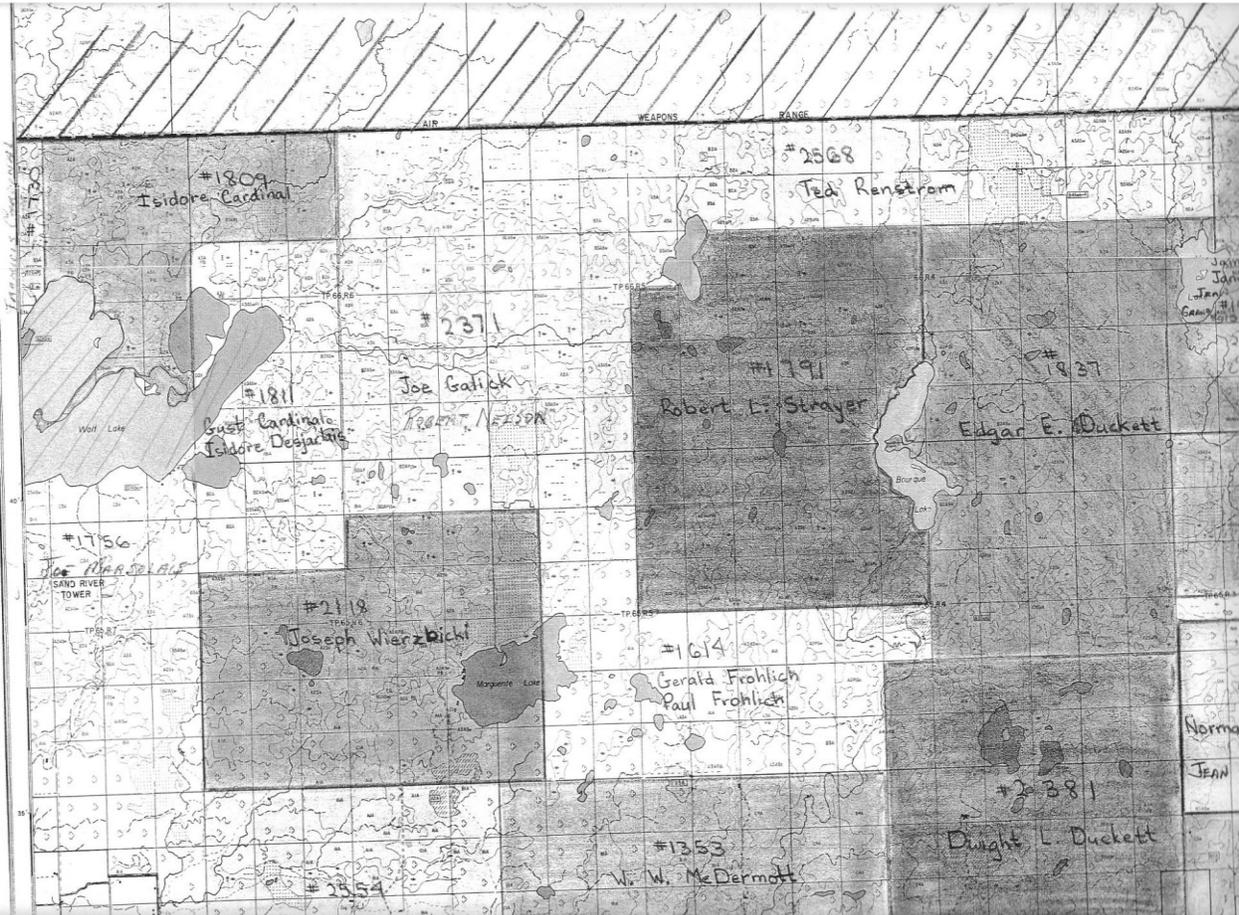
Appendix 7: Primrose Air Weapons Range



Alberta Environment and Parks. "Cold Lake – Beaver River Water Management Plan Area."
<http://aep.alberta.ca/water/programs-and-services/river-management-frameworks/cold-lake-beaver-river-water-management-plan/planning-area.aspx>

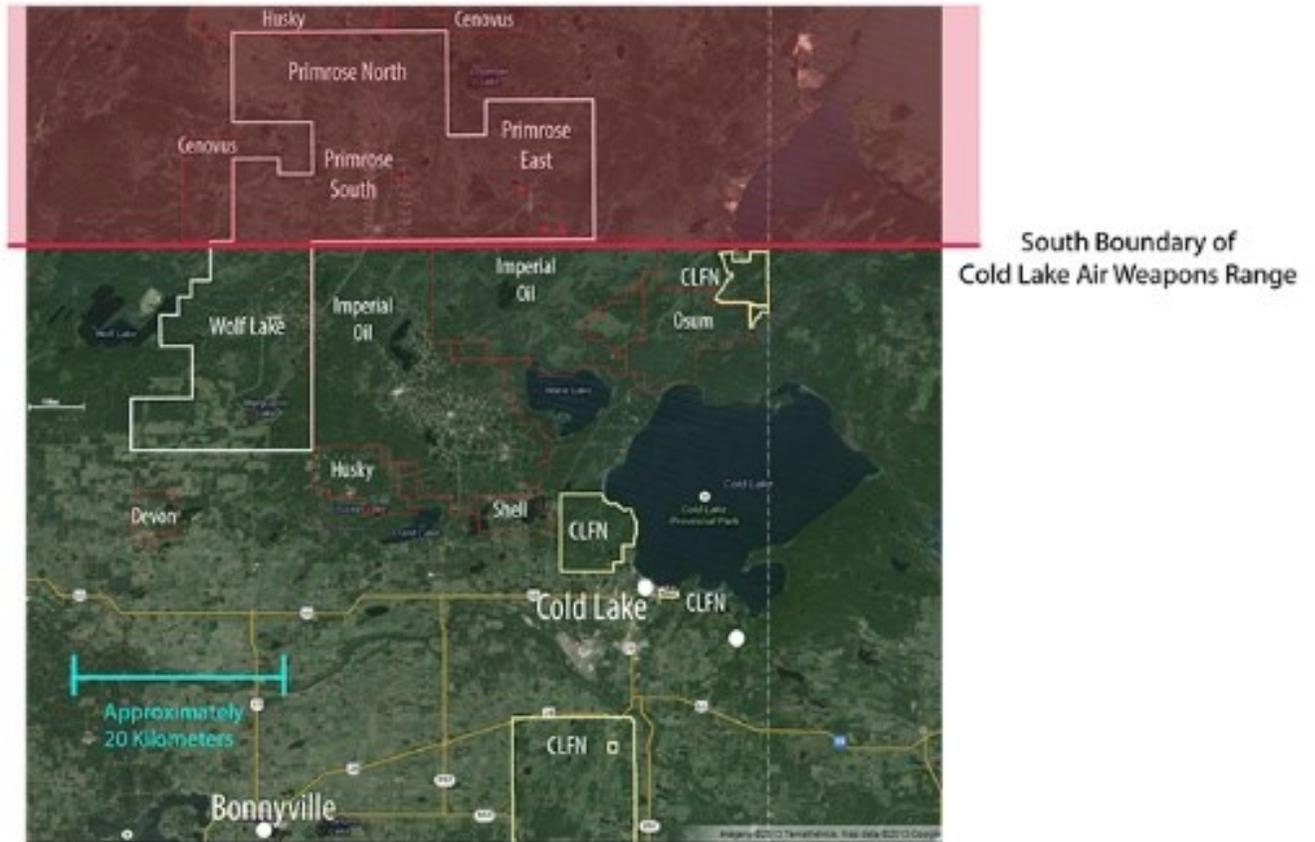
Appendix 8: Trap Line Map Wolf Lake

Note: The Weapons Range at the top of the map and Wolf Lake to the left. Isidore Cardinal's trapline #1809 has been reduced by the Weapons Range.



Department of Lands and Forests, "Trapline Map" 1961, Provincial Archives of Alberta, GR1990.0377, file 2898

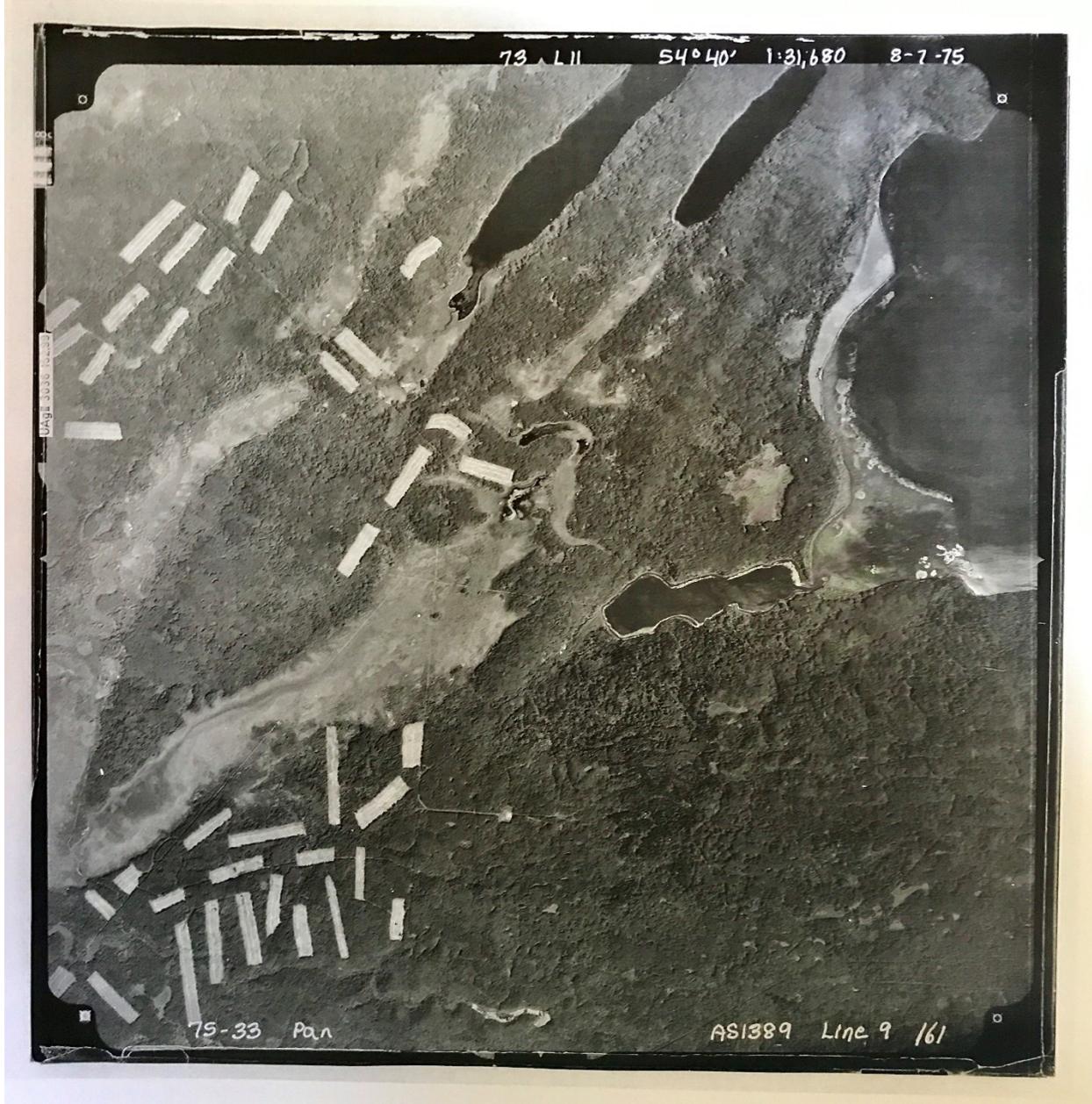
Appendix 9: Oil and gas wells Wolf Lake 2017



Canada Natural Resources. "Primrose Flow to Surface." 2017. <http://www.cnrl.com/corporate-responsibility/environment/primrose-fts>

Appendix 10: Aerial Photograph of Wolf Lake (1975)

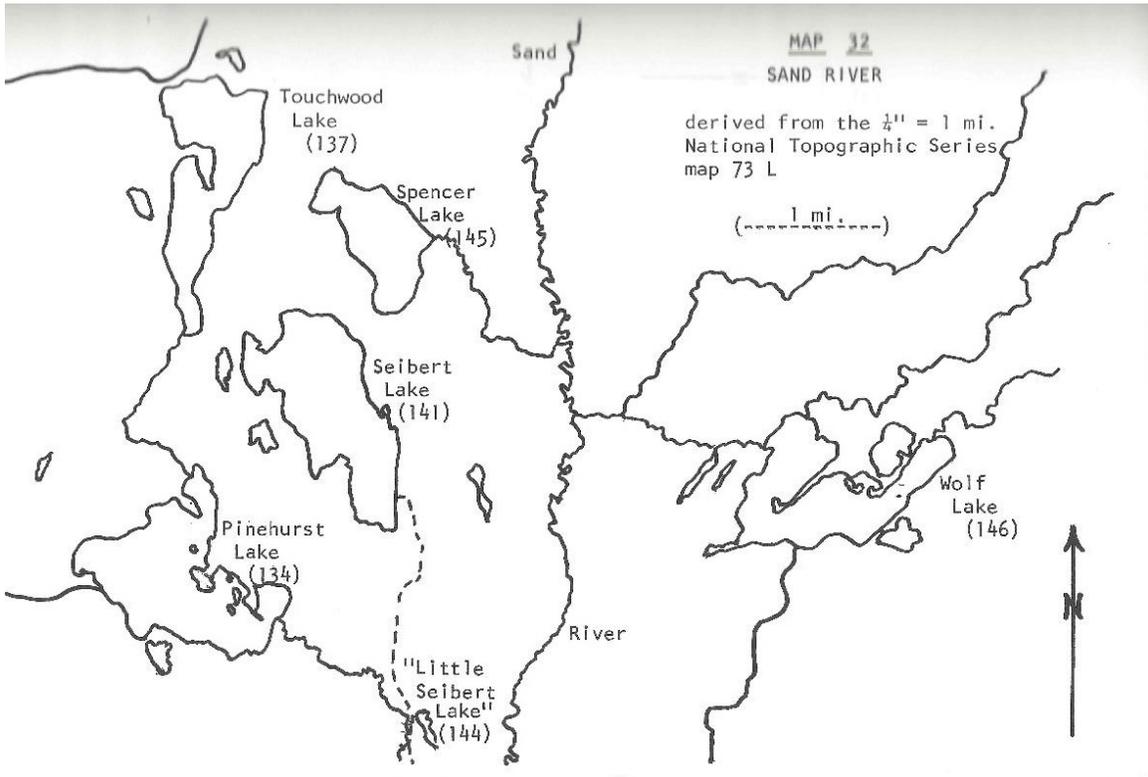
Note: The square plots directly to the west of Wolf Lake are patterns consistent with clear cutting, also note the roads connecting the clear cutting plots.



Air Photo Distribution Archive. Aerial photograph, AS1389, 73 L11, 54°40', 8-7-1975.

Appendix 11: Lakes connected to Wolf Lake

Note: Seibert Lake formerly known as Worm Lake. Spencer Lake formerly known as Mosquito Lake.
Other important Lakes in the area were Pinehurst Lake, and Touchwood Lake where the former Touchwood Settlement was located prior to its closure.



R.C. Chipeniuk, *Lakes of the Lac La Biche District*, (Calgary: D.W. Friesen and Sons, 1975): 123.

Appendix 12: Photographs of Wolf Lake



Marion Larivière
Wolf Lake March 1942



Monique (Cardinal) LaPrete
Wolf Lake 1942



James Brady and
Louis Larivière
Wolf Lake 1942